Thomas Jones

Samuel Jones

AN EPITOME

OF THE

HISTORY OF THE WORLD,

FROM THE CREATION TO THE

ADVENT OF THE MESSIAH,

EXHIBITING THE

FULFILMENT OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECIES,

PARTICULARLY

IN RELATION TO THE JEWS;

EVINCING THE CONNEXION OF DIVINE DISPENSATIONS THROUGH A PERIOD OF FOUR THOUSAND YEARS.

By JOHN HOYLAND.

I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.—*Milton.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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ADDRESS

TO THE READER.

THE Compiler judges it not improper to offer a brief account of his motives for publishing the present work; and, with this view, to state, that in early life, his attention was diverted from scientific to commercial pursuits; in which, during many years, he was closely engaged.

Having at that time observed a great difference, in the opinions of Commentators, respecting various parts of the Scriptures, he was disposed to adapt his ideas to his situation, by considering many biblical representations, to be of a hieroglyphical nature, which, were it in his power to decypher, would require more time and application than he could appropriate to the purpose.

It was, nevertheless, his opinion, that the predictions of the Old and New Testaments, when first delivered, must have been deemed

of great importance, to engage writers, in those early ages, to transmit them, with so much exactness, to succeeding generations. Many years however elapsed before the idea presented, that if any benefit was to be derived from the fulfilment of prophecies, the suffering of time wholly to pass over, without reaping the advantage, would be an inexcusable neglect.

The Scriptures had been printed more than 200 years, in the English language; and no doubt could be entertained, that persons of eminence had given to the world, some sentiments on the various predictions they exhibit. Considerations like these, prompted a desire to be acquainted with those means of information, as far as relaxation from other engagements, would admit of the indulgence. And the Compiler now esteems it no small favour, to have had opportunity, though late, in life, of appropriating some time to subjects so highly interesting, as to have employed the tongues of angels, and of prophets; as well as the pens of inspired writers, in different ages of the world.

The impressions made upon his mind, in the course of reading various publications, which confirm the authenticity of the sacred records, and produce conviction of the vast importance of the subjects on which the Scriptures treat, incited

the sentiment that he would be unworthy of the knowledge received, did he not attempt to place it within the reach of such of his countrymen, of different denominations, as have not leisure for literary researches.

In the address prefixed to the first edition of "the Epitome," it was stated, that the commercial spirit of the nation, had been little diminished by the numerous obstacles which had been opposed to it; that in the year 1810, exports of British produce and manufactures, amounted to upwards of thirty-five millions sterling; and that in making provision for that purpose, tens of thousands of persons, must be so much engaged in manual and mercantile occupations, as to preclude any other object of pursuit requiring much time and attention. Principally on account of persons of this description, the plan of the following work was devised.

Leaving uncertain and doubtful hypotheses, to those who have leisure for scientific researches, these volumes aim at simplicity and perspicuity; in order that the information selected and conveyed in them may not prove a tax on the time, even of the most busy; but, on the contrary, may furnish them with a highly interesting gratification.

The views of the Compiler in the first instance, were confined to the class of individuals, just defined; but in the prosecution of the design, his views extended to the rising generation; and particularly to the seminaries for their tuition.

The extraordinary and very laudable exertions made for some years past, to provide the means of instruction for the lowest orders of society, by placing the first necessary elements of education within the reach of all, greatly increased the number of persons who could read the Scriptures. Whilst the civilization and improvement of the most abject class of the community, was thus speedily advancing, an Institution sprung up, as if to second these measures, which is perhaps the most remarkable that has been presented to the contemplation of man, in any age of the world; whether we consider the grandeur of its object, the comprehensiveness of its plan, or the rapidity of its progress.

The British and Foreign Bible Society was formed, not only to furnish the Scriptures in the different languages of the Island, to all persons capable of reading them; but to effect translations of the sacred writings, and diffuse them throughout every habitable region of the globe. The dignity, philanthropy, and active zeal of an Institution, so sublime, is adapted, like the sun

in its progress, to enlighten the darkest corners of the world, and to cheer with its benign influence, the most abject of its inhabitants.

Here it may be remarked, that the exertions in India, prior to the establishment of the Bible Society, and in co-operation with that Institution, since it was set on foot, for the translation of the Scriptures into various languages of the East, have been truly extraordinary.

To ascertain the state of the religious education of young persons, in this country of the middle class, the Compiler has taken a view of the provisions made for that purpose, by various societies of Protestant Dissenters. Their institutions being on a smaller scale than that of the Church of England, it was imagined they would admit of a closer, and more individual attention to this important object.

It is well known that most denominations of Christians, have drawn up articles of their faith, to make the world acquainted with their ideas on certain doctrinal points; and by entering into controversial disquisitions, have given proof of their zeal in the support of favourite tenets. Some of them have instituted catechetical means of inducing their children to commit to memory, the principles of their creed, as well as the most important events recorded in the Old and New

Testaments; and some have superadded memorials of individuals of their persuasion, whose lives and experiences were likely to be instructive.

But few of them, in their collective capacities, appear to have paid so much attention to the interesting subject of religious education, as to take care that those of their societies, who have not the opportunity of academical instruction, should be made acquainted with the history of the Providences of God, as deducible from the wondrous events of sacred writ.

When it is considered that persons of the class just described, form a great proportion of the population of this country, there appears to be much occasion, in schools,[x] for the establishment of a course of reading, that will illustrate the scriptural accounts, of the varied dispensations of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, throughout successive ages. Thus in the moral government of the world, that display of Omnipotence may be evinced, by which the wrath, and even the contentions of men, have been made subservient to the gracious designs of Divine prescience and mercy. A

x To the credit of Scotland, it ought to be mentioned, that the establishment of a free-school in every parish, is a branch of the ecclesiastical constitution of the country; and this plan brings the means of instruction within the reach of the poorest; inducing habits of decency, industry and order.

survey thus taken, of the foundations which from age to age, have been laying for the marvellous superstructure of the Gospel, will be likely to promote a confidence in their security and permanency; and those incidents, which by sceptics and infidels have been made an occasion of objection to the Scriptures, may be seen in such a point of view as to confirm and establish the authority of the sacred records.

It might be of considerable service to the finishing of education, were every religious society to furnish a well selected library, to schools taught by persons of their respective persuasion, and to encourage teachers to promote a course of reading, by which their pupils might not only obtain information of the elements of general knowledge, but acquire amiable, awful, and sublime ideas of the Supreme Being. The Bishop of Llandaff justly observes, in his Theological Tracts: "The dispensations of an All-wise Providence are intended for our contemplation: and it is a singular advantage to form a right understanding of them; because they will tincture our conceptions of God, and influence our dispositions towards Him. If we judge truly of his works, we shall have delightful and lovely ideas of the workman. His wisdom, his goodness, and truth will conspicuously appear;

and we shall confess, that He is worthy of our highest attachment and regard."

Looking at the generality of schools to which those who are designed for trade are sent, and at which they mostly continue until fourteen years of age, there seems to be a great waste of time, in employing six or seven years, in acquiring little more than the arts of writing and arithmetic, and the knowledge of English grammar.

Considering how many other branches of education, girls acquire in the same time, much useful instruction might certainly be added to the plan of most day schools for boys, were the teachers suitably encouraged. It is to be feared that the Old, and New Testaments, have been for some years almost totally banished from many schools. Great as the objection has been, to their becoming the ordinary means of first instruction in the art of reading, no good reason can be assigned for their being entirely discarded; but, on the contrary, there is much occasion for a judicious introduction of them, to be publicly read; yet not by children who have attained to little capacity of understanding the subjects, as by such, the sense must be grievously marred.

Some hours in every week, should be appropriated, in day schools, to acquiring the knowledge of the Scriptures, by their being audibly read

by one of the best readers of the highest class; and all other operations entirely suspended, to admit of the whole school giving attention. This mode, instead of being considered a task, would prove an agreeable relaxation; and then the masters might direct such other reading as was intended to illustrate the subjects on which the Scriptures had treated.

For young persons, this may be called learning their exercise; for the Scriptures undoubtedly furnish weapons, by which the attacks of sceptics and infidels, upon some of the most remarkable events of sacred history, may be successfully combated by those who have been trained to the use of these arms; while to those who have not acquired some tactical skill, there may be danger of their own artillery being turned against them. It is the more desirable that boys who are intended for trade, may be thus instructed in day schools; because it is not probable, that for many years afterwards, they may have a favourable opportunity of acquiring this kind of knowledge.

The trust reposed in those who keep boarding schools, is of greater importance; they have undertaken much of the charge of forming the minds of the young persons committed to their care. To promote this by reading, it will not

be sufficient that their pupils have free access to books, however judiciously selected; though this may be of material advantage to such of them as are studiously inclined; but it will be necessary to institute public readings, that none may miss of the benefit of religious, as well as moral instruction.

"[x] The excellence of Christianity, and the important end which it proposes, should induce every one to be fully acquainted with Divine truths, by taking a distinct view of its nature and evidences. He will then avoid the imputation of being a Christian, merely in compliance with the prepossession of his parents, or the custom of his native country; he will become one in consequence of a rational preference, and a proper estimation. His conviction of its truth will hereby become solid, and clear; he will perceive the strength of its foundation, and behold the extent of its advantages.

"He will be persuaded that it bears the character and stamp of Divinity; and consequently has every claim to the reception of mankind." For want of this knowledge, there is reason to fear many were carried away by

x Elements of General Knowledge.

the torrent of infidelity, which not long ago, remarkably threatened to deluge the whole land.

It has been justly remarked[x], that "those who know Christianity chiefly in the difficulties which it contains, and in the impossibilities which are falsely imputed to it; when they fall into the company of infidels, are soon shaken in mind by frivolous objections, and profane cavils; which, had they been bottomed in reason and argument, would have passed by them as the idle wind, and scarcely have seemed worthy of serious notice."

To offer some means of remedying this defect, is the object of the following sketch, which, however imperfect, will furnish variety of information, to those who have not an opportunity of consulting elaborate and voluminous works.

x Wilberforce's Practical View.

PREFACE.

IT has been stated in the Address to the Reader, that the attention which, for some years, has been paid to the education of the lowest classes of the community, has greatly increased the number of persons who can read the Scriptures. On this account, the elucidation of various parts of the sacred writings, which have been the scoff and derision of infidels, has become an object of increasing importance; that succeeding generations may not be imposed upon by any ignis fatuus, like that, which, about sixteen years ago, remarkably bewildered and misled abundance of people in England.

To contribute some means of preventing the recurrence of so great an evil, the following compilation is adapted to the use of families, and schools. It contains a historical and biographical arrangement, divided into chapters; comprises numerous extracts from publications of eminence, both ancient and modern, and is interspersed with a variety of anecdotes and reflections, to render it interesting to young persons of both sexes.

The attacks of scepticism and infidelity, have been principally directed against the Books of Moses, because they lay the foundation of all succeeding dispensations of Divine Providence to man. The Compiler has, on that account, entered into a particular description, as well as defence, of various parts of the Pentateuch; and it has been his aim to combine as much simplicity and perspicuity with his plan, as the nature of the work would admit.

Some remarkable events in the history of the Judges, which have excited much discussion among the learned, are in an especial manner adverted to; also the prophecies respecting the rise and fall of kingdoms, many of which contain striking illustrations of the history of Regal Governments.

The satisfaction which the Compiler has derived from various publications, enumerated in the subjoined list, has induced him to make extracts from them, as often as they appeared to be adapted to the design of his work, rather than to present similar ideas in a different dress. Every writer of merit, is entitled to the reputation which his own observations and reflections have acquired. With this view the commencement and conclusion of each quotation,

are distinguished by an appropriate letter, agreeably to the scheme, page xx. When a whole chapter is introduced from any author, reference is made to the work from which it is taken, by giving the authority at the end of the chapter.

In giving quotations from the works of justly celebrated authors, the Compiler trusts the correction of grammatical construction, and a few other alterations to render the sense more perspicuous, will not be deemed too great a liberty, especially as this work, from the subscriptions received for the present edition, seems likely to be introduced into many schools.

In the history of the Patriarchs, the most copious extracts are from *Hunter's Sacred Biography;* a work well deserving the attention of persons, who have leisure to go through seven volumes.

The chronological series, and the characters of the writers of various parts of the Old Testament, are chiefly derived from "Elements of Christian Theology," and from "Gisborne's Familiar Survey." The explications of prophecies are principally from "Newton's Dissertations." "I must confess," saith he, "that it was my application to history, that first struck me with the amazing justness of the scriptural

prophecies. I observed the predictions to be all along verified in the course of events; and the more you know of ancient and modern history, the more you will be satisfied of the truth of prophecy. They are only pretenders to learning and knowledge, who are patrons of fidelity."

The author of "the Elements of General Knowledge" observes, that an acquaintance with the affairs of the Jewish history, forms the first link in the chain of ancient records: "Thus we may observe the connexion which subsists between the branches of sacred and profane[x] history. We place the works of pagan writers in their proper situations, and give them additional value, by making them subservient to the cause of religion, and instrumental in the illustration of revealed truths.

"As the truth of Christianity is founded upon the strongest evidences, it unites, in the closest manner, our public and private, our temporal and eternal happiness; and, therefore, justly forms the most proper ground work of education."

x The appellation of Profane, is chiefly applied to ancient Histories, written principally by Pagans, in order to distinguish them from the sacred writings of the Jews.

We are informed, that at the era of the Protestant Reformation, and for a considerable time afterwards, the subject of religion excited the attention of all ranks of men. The scriptures were read with avidity, and became subjects of general conversation; and, with such writings, all that could read, thought it necessary to be acquainted. Hence there were but few unbelievers. And as the Scriptures become again generally read, it will be next to impossible there should be many. At no time since the Protestant Reformation, has the bible engaged so much attention, as at the present; in which there are instances of persons from seventy to eighty years of age, learning to read, that they may acquire a knowledge of the Scriptures. The internal evidences of their Divine authority are so numerous and striking, that the minds of mankind can scarcely fail to perceive their superiority, and to be impressed with their infinite importance.

The generality of unbelievers will be found to be persons, to whom the subject of religion has, on some account, become unpleasant; they therefore give but little attention to its evidences, and cannot be deemed competent judges, whatever may be their abilities or knowledge in other

respects. Hall, in his Sermon on this subject, says: "Infidelity is the joint offspring of an irreligious temper, and of an unholy speculation, employed, not in examining the evidences of Christianity, but in detecting the vices and imperfections of professing Christians."

Infidelity has passed through various stages, each distinguished by higher gradations of impiety; for when men arrogantly abandon their guide, and wilfully shut their eyes on the light of Heaven, it is wisely ordained that their errors should multiply at every step, until their extravagance confutes itself, and the mischief of their own principles works its own antidote. That such has been the progress of infidelity will be obvious from a slight survey of its history.

The Compiler thinks it necessary to observe, that he disclaims all idea of prophesying upon prophecies; that demonstration which their accomplishment affords, being amply sufficient in every age of the world; and as his work is not designed to discuss the tenets of any religious creeds or sects, he hopes it may prove equally agreeable to every description of persons professing Christianity.

1814.

AUTHORITIES

REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK.

Designation.	*Authority.*
a	Universal Dictionaries.
b	Universal History.
c	Geographical Grammars.
d	Watson's Apology for the Bible.
e	Watson's Theological Tracts.
f	Wilberforce's Practical View.
g	Derham's Astro Theology.
h	Rollin's Belles Letters.
i	Tytler's Elements.
k	Hunter's Sacred Biography.
l	Newton on the Prophecies.
m	Arthur's Expositions.
n	Element's of Christian Theology.
o	Hurd's Introduction to the Prophecies.
p	Halifax on the Prophecies.
q	Kett's Elements of General Knowledge.
r	Robertson's History of America.
s	Gisborne's Familiar Survey.
t	Abbe Millot's Elements.
u	Jenyns's View of the Internal Evidences.
v	Porteus, on the Beneficial Effects of Christianity.

For the use of these designations, see an example page 32, lines 16 and 20; also one commencing in page 34, line 5, and ending page 35, line 8; only the commencement and termination being marked, though a quotation extends to several paragraphs.

The letters *x*, *y*, or *z*, not being required for signs of quotation, are used as references to notes.

SKETCH

OF ANCIENT AUTHORS,

Referred to in this Work.

HERODOTUS.

HERODOTUS, an ancient Greek historian of Halicarnassus, was born about 484 years before the Christian era. He travelled over Egypt, Greece, Italy, &c. and acquired the knowledge of the history and origin of many nations; from which he composed the history which bears his name. Cicero styles him the Father of History.

CICERO.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius, was one of the greatest men of antiquity, whether we consider him as a Statesman, an Orator, or a Philosopher. The place of his birth was Aspina, in the kingdom of Naples. He was put to death 43 years before Christ.

DIODORUS.

Diodorus Siculus, an ancient historian, was born at Agyria, in Sicily, and lived in the reigns of Julius Cæsar, and Augustus. He says, in the beginning of his history, that he was no less than 30 years in writing it, in the capital of the world, the city of Rome. It comprised, in 40 books, the most remarkable events

of the world, during 1138 years. But, to the great disappointment of the curious, only 15 are extant. Justin Martyr calls him the most renowned and esteemed of all the Greek historians.

STRABO.

Strabo, an author of great celebrity, died at the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius. His books of Geography are accounted curious remains of antiquity. He explains the customs, manners, policy, and religion of various nations. He also gives some account of their famous men.

SENECA.

Seneca, Livius Annæus, a Stoic philosopher, was born at Corduba in Spain, about the beginning of the Christian era. He, together with his father and the rest of his family, removed to Rome, when he was so young that he was carried thither in the arms of his aunt. There he was educated under the best masters. He was preceptor to Nero; the first five years of whose reign, have been considered a perfect pattern of good government. But when Nero was hurried by Poppæa and Tigellinus into the most extravagant and abominable vices, he grew weary of his master, whose life must have been a constant rebuke to him; for he had said to Nero: "I had rather offend you by speaking the truth, than please you by lying and flattery." Nero attempted through the medium of Cleonicus, a freed man of Seneca, to take him off by poi-

son; but this not succeeding, he was put to death by opening his veins, his friends standing over him, whose tears he endeavoured to stop, sometimes by gently admonishing, and sometimes by sharply rebuking them.

The works of Seneca are so well known, by the several editions which have been published, that we need not recite them.

JOSEPHUS.

Josephus was the son of Mattathias, of the race of the priests. By his mother he was descended from the Asmonean family, which, for a considerable time, had the supreme government of the Jewish nation. He was born at Jerusalem, in the first year of the reign of the Emperor Caligula, A. D. 37. In the beginning of the Jewish war, he commanded in Galilee; and Vespasian, the general under Nero, having conquered that country, he became his prisoner. When Vespasian, upon being declared Emperor, went to Rome, Josephus staid with Titus, was present at the siege of Jerusalem, and saw the ruin of his city and country. He afterwards settled in Rome; and there he wrote his History of the Jewish Wars, in seven books; and of the Jewish Antiquities, in twenty books. His works were written in the Greek language.

PLUTARCH.

Plutarch, a great philosopher and historian of antiquity, who lived from the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius, to that of Adrian, was born at Cheronœa in

Greece. He was initiated early in study, to which he was naturally inclined; and was placed under Ammonius, an Egyptian, who having taught philosophy with reputation at Alexandria, travelled thence into Greece, and settled at Athens. Under this master he had made great advances in knowledge, and like a thorough philosopher, more apt to regard things than words, he pursued his knowledge to the neglect of languages.

On his return from Egypt to Greece, he visited, on his way, all the schools of the philosophers; and gathered from them all that he thought worthy to be regarded. He could not bear the paradoxes of the Stoics; but he was yet more averse to the impiety of the Epicureans. He took a special journey to Sparta, to search the archives of that famous Commonwealth. This enabled him to leave such a choice cabinet of observations upon men and manners. His works have been divided into lives and morals.

PLOTINUS.

Plotinus, an illustrious Platonic philosopher, was born at Lycopolis, a city of Egypt, in the year 204. He travelled much to acquire knowledge, and at 39 years of age he read philosophic lectures at Rome. The Romans paid great regard to this philosopher. Many of the senators became his disciples, and some quitted the functions of magistrates to lead a philosophic life. He had the reputation of being a man of such great virtue, as well as abilities, that many persons of both

sexes, when they found themselves dying, entrusted him with the guardianship of their children and estates.

The contempt he had for all worldly things, was the reason why he would not have his picture drawn; and when his disciple Amelius was urgent with him upon this head, "Is it not enough," said he, "to drag after us whithersoever we go, that image in which nature has shut us up? Do you think we should likewise transmit to future ages an image of that image, as a sight worthy of attention?" He had so little regard for the body, that he considered it a prison, from which it would be his supreme happiness to be freed. He died at 66 years of age, in the noblest manner a heathen philosopher could resign his life; these being his words as he breathed his last: "I am labouring, with all my might, to return the divine part of me, to that Divine whole who fills the Universe."

B. C. Before Christ. A. D. In the year of our Lord.

Reigns of Roman Emperors, during the periods of the Evangelical History.

Augustus having reigned from the death of Julius Cæsar, 57 years.

	A. D.
Died A. D.	14
Tiberius began his Reign	14
Caius Caligula	37
Claudius began his Reign	41
Nero	54
Galba	68
Otho	69
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Vespasian	79

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EPITOME

OF THE

HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

ON

SACRED HISTORY.

AS it can be shown, that historical researches, confirm the authenticity of the Mosaical account of the primitive world, the book of Genesis takes precedence of all other histories; not merely in consideration of its forming the first link in the chain of ancient records, but of its imparting the earliest information to us, that there is a God, who existed before all things; that he made the world by his Word alone, and thus gave proof of his Omnipotence.

The word "Scriptures," literally signifies *Writings;* and the word "Bible," *Book;* but these appellations are, by way of distinction and pre-eminence, exclusively applied to those books of the Jews which are denominated sacred. The word *Scriptures* occurs, in this sense, in the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles; whence it is evident, that, in the time of our Saviour, this term denoted the books received

by the Jews, as the rule of their faith. To these books have been added the writings of the Apostles and Evangelists, which complete the collection of books acknowledged by Christians to be canonical.

The Bible thus divided into two parts, is called the Old Testament and the New. Beginning with the former, we assert, that the only authentic and genuine History of the Creation, and of what came to pass before the flood, and for several ages after, is that left us by Moses, in the book of Genesis.

To the truth of the principal events recorded in this book, we have abundant testimonies from philosophers, poets, and historians of antiquity. [d] And it is remarkable that those books which come the nearest to it in age, make either distinct mention of the facts recorded in Genesis, or the most evident allusion to them [d].

Josephus, the eminent historian of the Jews, when enumerating the books which were believed to be of divine authority, and which comprehend the history of all ages, informs us, "that five of them belong to Moses; which contain the original of man, and the tradition of the succession of generations down to his death, taking in a compass of about 3000 years."

These five books are at the head of the Old Testament, viz. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. To the first of these books, the Greeks gave the name of Genesis, which signifies production and generation; because it begins with the history of the production and generation of the inanimate and of the animate creation. The word Exodus, also derived from the Greek, signifies going out; this second book is so called, because it describes the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. The third relates to the office of the levitical priesthood, and is therefore called Leviticus. The fourth, from its containing the account of numbering and classing the people, is called Numbers; and Deuteronomy, signifying the second book of the law; is so called, because in the fortieth year of the journey of the Israelites, when all the men of war who came out of Egypt had died by the way, Moses rehearsed, in the ears of the people that had been born in the wilderness, the Lord's dealings with their fathers, his promises, his commandments, his statutes, and his judgments. It is apprehended that Ezra, on his return from the Babylonish captivity, added to this book, the account of the death of Moses.

These five books collectively, have the appellation of the Pentateuch, a name composed of two Greek words, signifying five and book.

The books of Moses are considered not only the oldest, and the best authenticated,[d] but the most comprehensive and important in the history of the world; giving more satisfactory proofs of the being and attributes of God, of the origin and end of human kind, than ever were attained by the deepest researches of the most enlightened philosophers.

The tenth chapter of Genesis may appear to some people, to contain nothing but an uninteresting narrative of the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth; but it is one of the most valuable records of antiquity. It explains what all profane historians were ignorant of, the origin of nations; and it gives such an account of the peopling of the earth after the deluge, as no other book in the world gives; the truth of which, all the books that contain any thing on the subject confirm. The last verse of the chapter says: "These are the families of the sons of Noah after their generations, in their nations; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood."

Divers authors have traced out the situations in which these founders of empire settled,

so much to the satisfaction of competent judges, that, was there no other proof of the authenticity of Genesis, this might be deemed sufficient. But any man who has barely read his bible, and has but heard of such people as the Assyrians, the Elamites, the Lydians, and the Medes, will readily acknowledge that they had Assur, and Elam, and Lud, and Madai, grandsons of Noah, for their respective founders[d].

It was very easy for Moses to be satisfied of the truth of what he delivered; because it came down to him through a few hands; for from Adam to Noah, there was one man, Methuselah, who lived so long as to see them both. Shem conversed with Noah and with Abraham; Isaac with Abraham and Joseph; from whom the materials for the composition of Moses's history might be easily conveyed by his own father Amram, who was cotemporary with Joseph, and was his kinsman.

The miraculous and historical parts of the books of Moses are so intermixed, that they cannot be separated; they must be true because the historical parts are better authenticated than any other history. [e] No nation in the world can be more sure of any of their public acts and records, preserved in their archives with the utmost care,

than we are of the truth of the Scriptures now in our hands.

The Jews preserved the books of Moses, as the law of their kingdom, in the most sacred part of the Tabernacle, and of the Temple. These books, the Psalms, and the Prophets, were every where publicly read in their Synagogues, every week on the Sabbath day. Their learned men, with the utmost exactness and scrupulosity, inspected and guarded the text, even so far as to count the very number of letters in every book. In short our Lord and the Apostles frequently quote Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, without any intimation that these books were in any respect altered or depraved. Whereas, had they indeed been corrupted, we need not doubt that our blessed Saviour would have reformed this, as well as any other instance of corruption among the Jews.

David wrote about 400 years after Moses; Isaiah about 250 after David; and Matthew more than 700 years after Isaiah.

The character of Moses would wonderfully contribute to the making of his book famous. He was a man illustrious as well by reason of his education, as the rank he held amongst men; a man equally exposed to the judgment of enemies and friends; and who could not vent the least

thing contrary to truth in matters of great importance, without being himself immediately refuted, or exposing himself to public scorn[e].

According to the best Chronologers, Moses was born about the year of the world 2433, and was sent to bring Israel out of Egypt about the year 2513. Thus were the World and the Church two thousand and five hundred years without any of the sacred books. Revelation, which for many ages had been verbal, was handed down by the long lived Patriarchs from one to another. [m]The Church, as well as the World, subsisted upwards of four thousand years before any of the books of the New Testament were written.

The Jews pretend, that, besides what Moses committed to writing in the Pentateuch, he received from God a variety of revelations, which he did not write, but communicated verbally to Aaron; that Aaron or his sons delivered them to the judges; the judges to the prophets; and the prophets one to another, from generation to generation. According to this hypothesis, the Jews had a two-fold rule to direct them in matters both civil and religious; one written in the sacred Books; the other verbal, transmitted by tradition from age to age: the last, according to them, ascertained the sense of the first. The

written law without the oral, they considered as doubtful and precarious, if not altogether unmeaning. Exceedingly did these traditions multiply before the coming of Christ in the flesh; for when he appeared personally on earth, he found the Jews degenerated so far, that their religion consisted almost entirely in the observation of traditions, which occasioned these reprehensions: "laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men," "making the word of God of none effect, through your traditions, which ye have delivered; and many such like things do ye." "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Of these traditions it is not necessary to give any particular account: not a few of them are nugatory and trifling, others ludicrous and whimsical, if not impious.[m]

These traditions were collected by Rabbi Judah Hakkodesh, about the year of our Lord 150; and the collection of them is known in ecclesiastical history, by the name of the Mishnah.

[m] A commentary was written upon them, by another Jewish Doctor, about a hundred years after. This has been called the Talmud of Jerusalem, or, a Directory for the Jews inhabiting the land of Judea. As this commentary was judged to be obscure, another was written and entitled the Talmud, or Directory of Babylon. This last is

said to be held in the highest estimation among the Jews; but, as it was found to be voluminous, a Rabbin of the twelfth century abridged it.

As for the Books called Apocrypha, the name is of Greek original, and literally signifies, hidden or unknown. These books might be denominated hidden, or unknown books, because they want the characters and marks of divine authority. They appear to have been entirely unknown in the first and best times of Christianity.

The greater part of the Old Testament, as is well known, was originally written in Hebrew; which was the language of the Jews, to whom the prophetic oracles were delivered. It was translated into Greek at different times, and by different persons[m].

One of the old Greek versions was called the Septuagint on account of its being considered the work of seventy-two Interpreters. Most of the New Testament was originally written in Greek, the Greek Language, at that time, being the most generally known.

[m]There is in the Scriptures a divine majesty, peculiar to themselves, which distinguishes them from all other books; and, in purity, they are so much superior to all other writings, that not any can come in competition with them. How unequal are the most celebrated compositions of pagan

antiquity! In them often are vices extolled for virtues. What impurities are there in the Alcoran of Mahomed; does it not tolerate, or rather encourage sensuality[m]! Though the Scriptures were not all written at once, but in detached parts, at distant periods, and by different persons; yet there is as much harmony and consistency in them, as if they had been all written by one hand. What greater demonstration can we possibly have, that the holy men who spoke what is treasured up in those writings, were all under the same influence, *that* of the one eternal Spirit?

[m]How often do the most celebrated Philosophers contradict each other, and not a few of them are, at different times, at variance with themselves! What palpable contradictions are there in the Alcoran! the fact is so glaring, that Mussulmen, the votaries of Mahomet, themselves, are constrained to admit it. They say Mahomed was employed upwards of twenty years in writing his Alcoran; during that long period, revolutions happened which obliged the Deity to repeal certain laws which he had formerly enacted, and enjoin others in contradiction to them. What, is twenty years a long period? Could not an omniscient Almighty Being foresee every event, the most fortuitous that could happen, during twenty years? What is a period of twenty years in com-

parison of the interval between the writing of the first and last book of the Scriptures! Instead of twenty, here is a period of many hundred years. From Moses who wrote the first, till the Apostle John who wrote the last of them, there was an interval of a thousand and five hundred years[m].

The enemies of religion, have pretended to find numerous contradictions and inconsistencies in the sacred writings; yet, as often have the advocates of Truth shown, to the conviction of the unprejudiced part of mankind, that all such contradictions are but pretended, not real.

Sir Isaac Newton esteemed the Bible as the most authentic of all histories; which, by its celestial light, illumines the darkest ages of antiquity; which is the touchstone whereby we are able to distinguish between true and fabulous theology; between the God of Israel, holy, just, and good, and the impure rabble of Baalim;—which has been thought, by competent judges, to have afforded matter for the laws of Solon, and a foundation for the philosophy of Plato; which has been illustrated by the labour of learning in all ages and countries, and been admired and venerated for its purity, sublimity, and veracity, by all who were able to read and understand it.

[e]But the Scriptures are not given us for amusement or mere speculation in perusing the curious

remains of antiquity, the language, manners, and theology, of some celebrated ancients; they are all pointed directly at our hearts and lives, to make us wise unto salvation. There, we find every rule of the most consummate wisdom, and every principle of truth and comfort; and the whole is designed to refine our nature into its proper excellence, to guide us in the paths of purity, peace, and righteousness; to make us happy in ourselves, and a blessing to all about us; and, finally, to qualify us for the full enjoyment of God for ever.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE CREATION.

THE Book of Genesis opens with this declaration: "In the beginning God created the heaven, and the earth; and the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

The words, "In the[x] beginning," do not necessarily import more, than, that when God began the work of creation, he created both heaven and earth; nor from the expressions, "the earth was without form and void," have we any ground for an apprehension which some have entertained, that the earth was from all eternity. Such a supposition destroys every idea of creation, and cannot comport with the

x Before the creative acts mentioned in this Chapter, all was eternity. Time signifies duration, measured by the revolutions of the heavenly bodies; but, prior to the creation of these bodies, there could be no measurement of duration, and consequently no time. Therefore, "In the beginning," must necessarily mean the commencement of time which followed, or rather was produced by God's creative acts; as an effect follows, or is produced by a cause. See Adam Clarke's Bible.

words, "In the beginning." That which was from all eternity cannot be said to have had a beginning. The Wisest of men, in his description of wisdom, inculcates this sentiment; "When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depths; when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, &c." Moses, in his derivation of the origin of the world, uses the words *tohu, bohu*, which signify confusion of matter, dark, void, and without form.

[e]This is termed by the Greeks, *Chaos;* a word which hath a similar signification. The Barbarians, Phenicians, Egyptians, Persians, all refer the origin of the world, to a rude, mixed, and confused mass of matter. The Greeks —Orpheus, Hesiod, Menander, Aristophanes, Euripides, and the writers of the Cyclic Poems,

all speak of the first Chaos. Lastly, the Latins, as Ennius, Varro, Ovid, Lucretius, and Statius, are all of the same opinion; as have been all the Sophists, Sages, Naturalists, Philosophers, and Poets of antiquity [a]. Hence it appears, that all ages of the world have concurred in the account which Moses has given. Had modern writers stopped there, and, instead of attempting to describe the manner in which Infinite Power brought forth order out of confusion; had they acknowledged that his ways were past finding out, they would have given proof of their wisdom in estimating the extent of human powers, the limitation of which is wisely adapted to our finite state. To detail the monstrous hypotheses which have been handed down to us, with the discussions which they have excited, would be to fill volumes; it may suffice to say, for the most part, they are so absurd, incoherent, and contradictory, that, like the building of the Tower of Babel, they end in confusion.

It may be asked then, Of what use is the information, that Creation was preceded by a confused mass of indigested matter, or to what purpose was such knowledge communicated? Would not an instantaneous production of something out of nothing, have been a more striking attestation of Omnipotence? To this it may be

replied, When we have before us, the proof, that not only earth, but air and sea are peopled with innumerable inhabitants, with beings in which is the breath of life; what other productions would so strikingly demonstrate an Almighty Power? If the description given us of creation, is of a gradual and progressive work, let us inquire whether some instruction is not intended to be conveyed in this representation. Herein we shall find a remarkable display of the goodness of an Omniscient Creator, stooping to the condition of his creature man, in condescending to give to him his own example for the employment of six days out of seven, for the purpose of bringing order out of confusion. Here is a lesson for that being, who has been endowed with intellectual powers, and who is placed in a world that stands in need of his help; for, bountiful as is the hand of Providence, his gifts are not so bestowed as to seduce us into indolence, but are calculated to rouse us to exertion. "This habitation," says Goldsmith, "though provided with all the accommodation of air, pasturage, and water, is but a desert without his cultivation. To man, in a savage uncontriving state, the earth is an abode of desolation, where shelter is insufficient, and even food precarious.

"Those inconveniences which art can remedy, are a proper call for the exertions of his faculties; the exercise of which has a tendency to assimilate him more, and more, to his Creator." And he adds, "God beholds with pleasure, that being which he hath made, converting the wretchedness of his situation into a theatre of triumph; bringing all the headlong tribes of nature into subjection to his will; and producing that order and uniformity upon earth, of which his own heavenly fabric is so bright an example."

Instead then of calling in question the Omnipotence of our Creator, let us admire his wisdom; let us praise him for his goodness, in holding out such an encouragement to our diligence and perseverance in the improvement of his gifts.

The appropriation of six days for work, and one for rest, recommends itself to us as a standard for the distribution of time; in its having been adjusted by Him, who, knowing the human frame, was the perfect Judge of the degree of labour, as well as of cessation from it, best adapted both to the corporeal and mental organization of man. That it was intended for the instruction of those who lived before the flood, there can be no doubt; because it exactly accords with the divine institutions, upon settling the Jewish polity, after the return out of Egypt. For the

re-establishment of the sabbath, this reason is expressly assigned: "For in six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it." In the first charge concerning it given by Moses, he styles it, "the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord."

The sabbath signified not only rest, but that the people themselves were the Lord's; and was therefore designed for the contemplation of their dependence upon his bounty, from which all their blessings flowed. What so likely to inspire humility and gratitude, the source from which spring adoration and praise! With this view also, the seventh, called sabbatical, year was appointed to remind them, that both they and their land were the Lord's.

This method of dividing the week prevailed even in those heathen nations, who cannot be supposed to have had any knowledge of the law, or history of Moses; and we actually find that they accounted one day in seven more sacred than the rest.[y] This may be accounted for by the traditions carried into all parts of the world, by those who were dispersed at the building of Babel.

[y] See the *Note* at the bottom of page 49.

[e] The great end for which we are brought into life, is to attain the knowledge, and to be confirmed in the love and obedience, of our heavenly Father; which includes all right action and virtue; all that is perfective of our nature; all that can render us happy in ourselves, and a blessing to others; all that can qualify us for the enjoyment of God, and fit us for immortal glory.[e] We cannot keep a due and prevailing sense of these things upon our minds, without their being frequently replenished with divine grace; our lamps cannot be kept burning, and our lights shining, without being often supplied with holy oil; to obtain which, requires frequent application to the Father of lights, the fountain of all illumination. The affairs and necessities of the present life, make such constant and importunate demands upon us, that our hearts and thoughts would be unavoidably engrossed by them, were we not reminded, by the public appropriation of

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y Hesiod styles the seventh day, the illustrious light of the Sun.

Εβδομαῃ δ' αυϑις λαμπρον φαος ηελιοιο

Homer says, then came the seventh day, which is sacred or holy.

Εβδοματῃ δ' ηπειτα κατελυϑεν ιερον εμαρ

a certain proportion of time to the purpose of divine worship, of the importance of religion in seasoning our minds with piety and virtue; and in fortifying them against temptation.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CREATION.

THE foregoing Chapter has principally related to matter in its chaotic state; we now come to those modifications of it, to which systematic arrangements have been given. We find in the Mosaic account, that on the third day, both heaven and earth had been created; and on the fourth day, "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also." To enter into scientific disquisitions on these subjects, would be to exceed the limits of this work; we must therefore confine ourselves to general observations; and briefly notice that astronomy seems to have engaged the attention of mankind in the simplest ages, and from the most remote antiquity.

The antediluvians are said to have had considerable skill therein. The Chinese appear to have made astronomical observations soon after the flood; their skill has been attributed to in-

structions received from Noah, supposed to be the Fohi of the Chinese. And Confucius, who lived 551 years before the Christian era, has recorded many eclipses.

The Chaldeans and Egyptians were noted in antiquity for their skill in astronomy. The countries they inhabited, from the general clearness and purity of the air, were exceedingly favourable to astronomical observations.

In those warm climates, where the sky is generally serene, and where it is the practice of the inhabitants, to this day, to sleep on the tops of their houses, and for the shepherds to watch their flocks by night, they would naturally be led to a contemplation of the firmament; and would soon remark that the multitude of stars observed the same course as the sun.

As that orb performed his course from east to west, and afforded to the world the advantages of day, the stars also and the moon glided along in coinciding circuits, during the cool refreshing season of night; and one star only, seemed to keep its place, and to be a centre of revolution to the other luminaries: this orb they called the polar star.

By the motion of the spheres, their ideas of time would be regulated; and all its divisions depend on their regular revolutions and stated

returns. In these simple ages of antiquity, and before the powers of vision were increased by the invention of the telescope, it was usual to express an innumerable multitude, an unbounded number, by the stars of heaven, or by the sand upon the sea shore [e].

[g] But Hipparchus, the Herodian, who lived 120 years before the Christian era, reckoned the stars to be 1022. This shining host, however numerous it may appear from the scattered and irregular disposition of the stars, when it is reduced into forms, can be more easily numbered than might be imagined; all the stars to be seen with the naked eye, in our hemisphere, do not much exceed 1000.

It is manifest from the deductions which all nations have made from God's Works, particularly from those of the heavens, that there is a God; and that such as have pretended to atheism, and have deduced these wonderful works from chance, are singular and monstrous in their opinions [g].

Plutarch, the Roman historian, who lived in the reign of the Emperor Claudius, saith; "Men began to acknowledge a God, when they saw the stars maintain so great a harmony, and the days and nights, both in summer and winter, to observe their stated risings and settings."

The Stoic in Tully, saith: "What can be so plain and clear, when we behold the heavens, and view the heavenly bodies, as that there is some Deity of a most excellent mind, by whom these things are governed; a present and almighty God? which he that doubts of, I do not understand why he should not as well doubt whether there is a sun that shines."

History informs us of many strange and unnatural schemes, which, at different times had been projected to represent the system of the heavens; but it was not until the 15th century, that Copernicus, a native of Poland, brought forward that which is called the Solar System. By making our earth turn round on its own axis, considering it to be a planet, revolving as well as the other planets, round the sun; and by making their satellites or moons, move in like manner round the planets, he accounted for day and night, and the vicissitudes of seasons, by a few simple revolutions. But the Copernican system supposed the firmament of the fixed stars, to be the utmost bounds of the universe.

Indeed the wonders of the heavens beyond the powers of the naked eye, were concealed before the invention of the telescope, which was not until the 17th century, by Galileo, a Venetian. His extraordinary talents greatly improved the first

invention; but it has been reserved for the period in which we live, to look as into the infinity of space. Dr. Herschel, the astronomer royal, has advanced the power of vision to an extent truly astonishing, by his most powerful telescope, which magnifies six thousand and five hundred times. He has discovered that all the stars which appear to us to decorate the skies, with the whole milky way, that shining zone of light, is but one stratum of shining orbs; is but one of innumerable clusters, scattered in the unbounded expanse.

Surveying the Galaxy, he calculated that, in one quarter of an hour, no less than 116,000 stars passed through the field of view of his telescope. He thinks the stratum in which we are placed, may contain many millions of stars.

[e] That some of these vast globes have a motion, is obvious to our sight; and that all have, may be be concluded from the constant similitude the works of nature have one to another. That they are not dropped here and there at random, and left to wander in the great expanse in uncertain paths, is manifest from our earth; which is at such a distance from the heavenly bodies, and the heavenly bodies at such a distance from one another, as not in the least to clash with, or disorder each other. Without an Almighty guide and director, how is it possible such vast unwieldy

masses should continue their revolutions, without the least intermission or interruption that we know of! What mechanism, or piece of clock work, was there ever under the whole heavens, that had not some stops, or some deviation? And yet no one was ever so stupid as to conclude, such machine was made by any other than a rational being; some artist who had skill for such a work. Cicero, one of the greatest men of antiquity, as an Orator, Statesman, and Philosopher, who lived 107 years before the Christian era, says of his friend Possidonius's piece of watch work: "Had it been carried among the Scythians or Britons, no man in their state of barbarity, would have made any doubt whether it was the workmanship of reason or not." No one then, who considers the structure of the universe, can fail to have his mind filled with the supremest veneration for its Author.[c]

[d] Who can contemplate without astonishment the motion of a comet, running far beyond the orb of Saturn; endeavouring to escape into the trackless regions of unbounded space, yet feeling, at its utmost distance, the attraction of the sun; hearing as it were the voice of Omnipotence arresting its progress, and compelling it, after a lapse of ages, to reiterate its course! Who can comprehend the distance of the stars from the

earth and from each other? It is so great, that it mocks our conception; our imagination is terrified and bewildered when we are told that one ray of light, which moves at the rate of more than ten millions of miles in a minute, if emitted at this instant from the brightest star, would not reach the earth in less than six years.

We think this earth a great globe, and we see the sad wickedness which individuals have been often guilty of, in the manner of scraping together a little of its dust. We view with still greater astonishment the mighty ruin, which, in all ages, has been brought upon human kind, by the low ambition of contending powers, to acquire a temporary possession of a little portion of its surface. But how does this globe sink as it were to nothing, when we consider that a million of earths will scarcely equal the bulk of the sun! that all the stars are suns; and that a million of suns constitute, probably, but a minute portion of that material world, which God has distributed through the immensity of space![d]

The sentiments of Seneca, the Philosopher, who lived in the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius, are very remarkable; when he exclaims, respecting our earth; "Is this that little point which is divided among nations, by fire and sword? ah! how ridiculous are the bounds

of mortals! It is a point, in which ye sail, in which ye war, in which ye dispose of kingdoms."

But above are vast spaces, into the possession of which, the mind is admitted, on condition that it hath brought little of the body along with it; that it hath cleansed itself from every filthy thing. "When such a mind" saith he, "hath touched these celestial regions, it is then nourished, and grows; and, as if delivered from its bonds, returns to its original state. And this argument it hath of its divinity, that it delights in divine matters, and is conversant with them; not as strange things, but as its own. There it securely beholds the rising and setting stars, their different courses, &c. Thus this curious Spectator discusses every thing, and searches out every thing." What sentiments are these for a heathen, and before the powers of vision had been enlarged by the invention of the telescope. He himself may be compared to a star, to one of the first magnitude, emitting its lustre in the dark night of paganism.

[d]But systems of insensible matter, however vast, prove only the wisdom and power of the Great Architect of nature: as precipient beings we look for something more from his goodness; and we cannot open our eyes without seeing it. Every portion of the earth, sea, and air, is full of sensible beings; capable, in their respective or-

ders, of enjoying the good things which an Almighty Creator hath prepared for their comfort. All orders of beings propagate their kind, and thus provision is made for a successive communication of happiness. Individuals yield to the law of dissolution, which is inseparable from the structure of their bodies, yet no gap is thereby left in existence. Their place is occupied by other individuals, capable of participating in the goodness of the Almighty.[d]

[e] What an infinite fulness of life and being, what an immense and inexhaustible treasury of all good, must that be, whence all this life and being was derived! How infinitely rich is the glorious and eternal God! Out of his own fulness he hath brought forth worlds: and worlds replenished with myriads and myriads of creatures furnished with various powers and organs, capacities and instincts; and out of his own fulness, continually and plentifully, supplieth them with all the necessaries of existence. Still his fulness remaineth the same, unemptied, unimpaired; and he can yet bring out of his fulness, worlds and worlds without end![e]

Seeing then how great a Being this Creator is, must we not conclude, in relation to us, that he is not only our Sovereign Lord, and Ruler, but our Preserver! Ought we not so to reverence

his power, as always to fear before Him? ought we not so to love him for his love, and for his goodness, as to worship and serve him with the whole heart; sincerely to comply with his holy will, and obey him in all things he hath either forbidden or enjoined?

Purity and innocence are so necessarily concomitants of divine worship, according to Cicero, that he makes them the mark which distinguishes religion from superstition, when he says: "But that religion, that worship of God is the best, the holiest, the fullest of piety; by which we always worship with a pure, upright, undefiled mind and voice; for not only the philosophers, but our forefathers have distinguished superstition from religion."

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN.

WHEN we see a person who has at his command all kinds of enjoyment, appropriating them solely to his own gratification, do we not think such a one has banished from his heart every disposition which enters into the composition of real goodness?

And if we contemplate the contrast of this shall we not conclude, that perfection of goodness could not be more unquestionably demonstrated, than in the communication of real happiness? Goodness was then the principle of creation; it was the foundation of God's works; consequently goodness, alone, must run through them all, from first to last. That happiness was dispensed to man in a high degree, may be inferred from

the declaration: "In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Man coming out of the hands of his Creator, in such a state, must have been an emblem of divine innocence and purity, from which true happiness is inseparable. [h] His body consisted of no higher material than the dust of the ground, but his mind was of nobler extraction; for God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth us understanding." Job xxxii, 8; the excellence of which appears in a surprising variety of inventions and discoveries. It is this faculty which penetrates into the most secret recesses of nature; judges of, and admires the beauty and construction of the universe; traces the footsteps of the most astonishing wisdom in the situations and motions of the heavenly bodies. By this we can review generations and actions, characters and events; look forward to futurity as far as to the final period of this world. By this we conceive, though but negatively, eternity itself; form ideas of the state and felicity of beings far superior to ourselves. By this we can extend our thoughts to the highest excellency, and contemplate the nature of the infinitely perfect Being; while instinct only

determines the pursuits of inferior creatures. Whilst they are utterly unable to judge of causes and effects; to draw consequences, or to reason about the nature and tendency of things, in order to avoid, or embrace; and are rather acted upon, than act; we deliberate, we choose our way, we feel and examine what is before us: this is good, and therefore to be chosen; that is evil, and therefore to be avoided; this will improve our minds, the other leads to dishonour and misery. We can contemplate the precepts of divine wisdom, derive instruction from them, converse with the Supreme Father, desire his favour, and dispose ourselves for the everlasting enjoyment of it.[h]

In man was the work of creation completed, on the sixth day. The account then winds up with this conclusion: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work, which he had created and made." In the charge given by Moses to the Israelites respecting the observance of the Sabbath, he frequently reminds them of the occasion of its being divinely instituted on the seventh day; but he does not refer to it in

any other manner, unless it be in the book of Job; where, to the sublime description of creation is added: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." A sabbath thus celebrated by the heavenly host, must have been unspeakably holy and glorious.

After the general account of creation, Moses descends to a more particular description of the formation of Adam and Eve, as well as of the situation peculiarly adapted to their residence: "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed."

Imagination cannot conceive a more delightful situation than this is represented to have been; for every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food, grew in it; and it was watered by a river so considerable, that thence it was parted, and became four heads. In addition were two trees, the description of which is very remarkable; one was the tree of life in the midst of the garden, the other the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to

keep it;" which shows that man was originally intended for business; and the Lord commanded his attention in the most positive manner, saying: "Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die[x]. When we contemplate the amplitude of the dominion and power over all other creatures with which Adam was invested, by his sovereign Lord and law-giver, we must conclude, that, feeling his heart overflow with gratitude, he would be desirous of giving signal proofs of his obedience and love; which, without some test of his fidelity and allegiance, could not have been manifested.

x Adam's obedience is put upon trial by the prohibition. He had not gained the habits of obedience, and holiness; but was put under this instance of discipline, in order to his acquiring them. These two trees have been considered as Adam's books: God was pleased, by these external means, to impress upon his mind just conceptions of the very different consequences of obedience and disobedience; and it will be of great use to us at this day, to look into and meditate upon these two books of our first father.

This is finely pourtrayed by our poet Milton in the speech of Adam to Eve:

"Then let us not think hard
One easy prohibition, who enjoy
Free leave so large to all things else, and choice
Unlimited of manifold delights:
But let us ever praise Him, and extol
His bounty, following our delightful task."

The tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, have given rise to much discussion. As to the first, it seems to be generally supposed, that it was a natural means of preserving man's life, and freeing him from all infirmity and decay: that the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was so called, because by the eating of it, man came to know experimentally, the vast difference between good and evil; he knew the greatness of the good formerly enjoyed, by the loss of it; and the greatness of the evil he had brought upon himself, by the feeling of it. Here is the first glimpse of the mystery of God; and of the scheme, commencing from the foundation of the world, unfolding itself by just gradations through a long succession of ages, and which will

be fully accomplished only in the consummation of all things.

The history of man is the history of the providence of God, having for its object his own glory and man's felicity.

This plan could not have commenced with a more appropriate figure than that of a garden.

A garden is taken out of common and waste ground, to be applied to the use of man; for which it is planted with all that it is profitable and delightful. The situation selected for the garden of Eden, and planted by a divine hand, was no doubt intended to be the prototype of the Church of Christ, chosen out of all the world. Here some portion of every grace being implanted, his love to it is represented in Canticles by the most affectionate language: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; and the prayer of the church to be made fit for his presence, is finely described in the language: "Awake, oh, north wind! and come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits." Some persons have thought it incredible that the Almighty should have had colloquial intercourse with the first of human beings; but what could

be more analogous to the ordinary course of Providence, than that *they* who had no other parents, should be instructed by an Almighty Father?

Concerning this inhabitant of the garden of God, dignified with power over all other creatures, the language might be adopted: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." But if he charged his Angels with folly in aspiring above their condition, if he spared not them, but cast them down, his justice would have been impeachable, had he spared beings, who, though inferior in might and power, aspired to the highest station, even to be as Gods.

Milton makes Satan exclaim, in one of his soliloquies—

"Behold, instead

Of us outcast, exiled? his new delight,

Mankind, created; and, for him, this world."

Book iv.

This presents the idea, that when one class of beings, render themselves unworthy of longer

continuance in the favour of the Supreme Governor of the universe, he transfers it from them to others; and it unquestionably accords with the general order of Providence, remarkably exemplified in his casting off his chosen people Israel, and receiving the Gentiles. The Apostle to the Romans says of this: "Behold therefore the goodness, and the severity of God; in those which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

"Of the duration of the innocence and happiness of our first parents, we have not any account; we must therefore proceed, however reluctantly, to that awful revolution which at length took place in their condition and character.

"Their history now becomes blended with that of the wicked and malignant spirit, who had left his first estate of holiness and felicity; and who, having artfully seduced them from their allegiance and fidelity, occasioned their incurring divine wrath, their expulsion from Paradise, and rendered them a prey to fear, shame, and remorse; and also subjected them to pain, disease, and death.

The devil, observing the serpent to be a creature of peculiar sagacity, fixed on him as a fit

instrument of seduction; and, as fearing a repulse from the superior firmness of man, he watches for and finds an opportunity when the woman was separated from her husband. He artfully addresses himself to a principle in nature, the unlawful indulgence of which has been ruinous to thousands; he excites her curiosity, then prompts her to doubt and reason in the face of a positive command. Having so far gained her attention, he rouses in her a spirit of pride and ambition, and then persuades her to make the dreadful experiment. She eats of the forbidden fruit, and, by transgression, acquires the knowledge of evil, whereas, hitherto, she had known only good. Eve fell by a curious and ambitious desire of a condition for which God had not designed her; a desire to be as God, to know good and evil: Adam, through unmanly weakness, in yielding to the persuasion of his wife, in defiance of his Sovereign.[k]

He to whom the approach of God was lately the highest gratification, now trembles with fear at his voice, and shrinks from Him with horror and remorse. That tongue, to which, before, gratitude and love had given utterrance, now learns to reproach and upbraid: "The woman thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the

tree, and I did eat." The change which had taken place in his internal disposition and character, required a correspondent revolution in his outward condition. Adam must no longer possess that paradise of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Justice drives the man out of Eden, who had cast himself out from the favour of his gracious Benefactor. The flaming sword of the cherubim, excluded from all access to the tree of life.

His labour, which, before, was altogether delightful, because it was inspired with gratitude, must, henceforward, be attended with pain; and it may be concluded, that mutual reflections and reproaches, embittered the happiness and increased the misery of our first parents. "But will God contend for ever, will he be always wroth? Then the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he hath made." He who saw that man had been deceived, that it was not out of malice, or an original presumption in him, that he had fallen; but through the subtilty of the serpent, who had first fallen himself; and by the mediation of the woman, his own nature and companion, whom the serpent had first deluded; in his infinite wisdom and goodness, found out a way to repair the loss. He declared that the old serpent, who is the devil and satan; who had, in

deceiving her, destroyed her posterity, should, by one who was peculiarly her posterity, be himself destroyed and slain: "Her seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In this promise is the first opening of christianity, and the work of redemption.

[k] Thus they leave Eden supported and cheered with the expectation of triumph over their bitter enemy, and of being restored to the favour of their offended God. Whether gratitude inspired by this hope, induced Cain to bring the fruit of the ground, and Abel the firstlings of his flock, each for an offering unto the Lord; or was it for averting his wrath in future, we are not informed; but in Abel, we have the first instance on record of the exercise of faith, which renders an offering unto God acceptable; by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.

But an event soon took place in Adam's family, which furnishes a melancholy instance, that the first quarrel in the world occasioned the shedding of human blood. Contemplating this as the sad consequence of his own transgression, what an inexpressible source of disappointment it must have been! How must it have embittered all his former grief! How would he accuse himself as not only the author of his own wretched-

ness, but the propagator of woe and misery to his family! The empire of Satan over the miserable world, would now seem confirmed, and the purpose of divine grace defeated: But his Creator yet takes pity on him, and being mindful of his promise, Seth is given to supply the loss of Abel; Seth, in whose line the promise runs, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ should come.[k]

CHAPTER V.

ON THE EVIL SPIRIT.

SCARCELY any subject has more baffled the attempt to be wise above what is written, than that which relates to the origin of moral evil. Let us then content ourselves with the light which sacred writ has thrown upon it.

Christ told the Jews, that the devil abode not in the truth; the plain inference from which is, that he had forfeited a good and happy state. Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, writes: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those that believed not; and the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." This may appear a terrible doom, but the representation is highly interesting; it assures us that the power of this grand

adversary is limited, and that he cannot go beyond the length of his chain. Let this encourage us to keep on our watch, that we be not enticed by his wiles; that we do not, by dallying with temptation, go upon his ground, and thereby put ourselves in his power. Let us, in the first instance, cleave to that which impresses our minds with a sense of danger, and warns us against joining in with evil, and we shall find it will be our shield and defence. The fear of offending a holy and righteous judge, as it is regarded, will, in our experience, answer the description given by the wise man: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Jude shows, that the punishment of the Lord upon the fallen angels, accorded with his dealings, on other occasions, with those of his rational creatures, who, having been remarkably distinguished by divine favour, became, nevertheless, disobedient and gain-saying. If it was not manifest that a Judge had power to pass the severest sentence, the law would be disarmed of its terror. Punishments then operate as preventive justice, and, in their effects, are extensively salutary.

Judge Blackstone says "Of all the parts of a law, the most effectual is the vindicatory[x]." We

[x] Commentaries, p. 56.

must therefore observe, that the main strength and force of law, consists in the penalty annexed to it. And Locke says: "The dread of evil is a much more forcible principle of human nature, than the prospect of good[y]."

The apostle Peter, in allusion to mankind, says: "The angels are greater in power and might;" which coincides with our ideas of their state being more glorious and dignified than that of our first parents in paradise.

In relation to divine judgments upon men, we read, the times of ignorance were winked at; but we cannot suppose angels to be ignorant that their insubordination would incur divine displeasure; for that would be to call in question divine justice in the infliction of a terrible punishment upon them.

Responsibility, in any situation, implies previous knowledge of what was required or enjoined. By Angels leaving their habitation, must be understood the quitting of some station or situation, which had been assigned to them; or in other words deserting their post; an act which must have been wilful, and which, in its consequences, would invert the order of all the powers of the mind, and thereby produce general corruption.

[y] Human Understanding, B. 2d, C. 21.

What occasion is there to trace moral evil to any other source than that of disobedience? Where there is the power to do good only, there cannot be any virtue or any praise.—Freedom of will is therefore necessary, as without it, there could not be any demonstration of fidelity or allegiance. But the indulgence of insubordination to a superior, is in itself criminal; and an opposition to the will of the Supreme Being, must be to counteract all that is pure and good. It must poison the fountain of action, render all its streams deleterious, and be productive of misery.

If there is as much justice in the punishment of transgression, as in the reward of virtue; and if the former has a more salutary operation than the latter, we have not any reason, on that account, to arraign the wisdom or to call in question the goodness, of the Almighty, in permitting the wickedness of his creatures to produce their correction; for we have seen it hath a tendency to lessen the influence of evil.

We may conclude that the punishment of these fallen angels, was only in proportion to the magnitude of their guilt; though the measure of it was so dreadful that the same apostle describes it, by their being cast down to hell. Speaking after the manner of men, we cannot suppose their crime to have been less than that of treason, or

rebellion in ministers of state, the first servants of the crown; which in these, to whom the greatest degree of power is deputed, and in whom the highest confidence is reposed, must exceed all others in blackness, and depth of ingratitude. We know that transgression of this enormity incurs utter destruction, and an attainder which cannot be expiated.

Whatsoever our attainments then may be, let us consider this account of fallen angels as intended to be a continual memento, to him that thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall. An idea that the condition is irretrievable, suppresses every incitement to worthy action. When character is once lost, how common is it for persons not only to abandon themselves to all kinds of evil, but to endeavour to draw others into the same excess!

What reason have we to suppose that the like cause did not produce like effects even in the fallen angels, seeing that one of them is always pointed out as the head of the apostacy?

Christ said of the devil:—"When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it." Could greater moral evil originate in him, than that which being invariably founded in deception, is always calculated to mislead and ensnare?—His subtilty is aptly re-

presented under the denomination of, "the Old Serpent, which is called the Devil, and Satan."

Jesus said to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." This is in effect saying they were under diabolical influence. And indeed the whole tenour of the Scriptures inculcates the doctrine, that we have to contend with the power of darkness, the evil spirit, whose dominion is so general as to entitle him to the denomination of, "the prince of this world, and prince of the power of the air, who now worketh in the children of disobedience."

From the Scripture account, we may conclude that a state of innocence was of short duration; by which it appears that the greatest prosperity is not any defence against temptation.

The history of the blissful state of man consists of but few particulars. "To plunge the human race into guilt and ruin, was comparatively the work of a moment; but to restore mankind to a life of innocence and happiness, employed depth of design to plan, length of time to mature and unfold, and irresistible power to execute. The history of the world, is in truth the history of redemption; for all the dealings of Providence with man, directly, or by implication, immediately or remotely, point out and announce a Saviour.

The promise to Adam after his fall was given in general, but not in obscure terms, of deliverance and recovery by one who should be, in a proper sense, the seed of the woman[k].

But to resume the thread of the History, the account of the first two men who were born into the world, seems to have been given to answer the purposes of warning and instruction to those who should come after them. For greater security in the journey of life, it is necessary to erect beacons, the admonitions of sudden dangers and death; as well as to set up indexes to point out the right path.

[k] Abel, though dead, continues to instruct men in the excellence and importance of genuine devotion. Cain stands to all generations a fearful example of ungovernable passion, hurrying a man on to blood, and then plunging him into despair. He who is smitten with his own conscience, is continually surrounded with enemies; thus Cain said:—"Every one that findeth me shall slay me." Let us endeavor to improve by these examples;—learning habitually to acknowledge, adore, and serve the great Author and Preserver of our being; who adorned our nature with his own glorious image, pitied us in our low and lost estate, and has laid help on one that is mighty to save; and who, by the exceedingly great and

precious promises of the gospel, is aiming at making us partakers of a divine nature, and delivering us from the bondage of corruption, in which we are sunk by reason of sin.

Adam could only communicate his own nature, which was of the earth, earthy; but the second man, being the Lord from heaven, the quickening Spirit, renews his spiritual offspring in the image of God, by which they are partakers of the divine nature.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ANTEDILUVIANS.

WITHIN 130 years from the creation of the world, we have an account of the building of a city by Cain; and that he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch; at which time his posterity must have been greatly increased.

Josephus says, that "the punishment inflicted upon Cain, was so far from effecting any amendment in him, that he grew worse, and became a reprobate to all sense of goodness; indulging himself in all manner of pleasures, though he wronged his neighbours to procure them; that he got together abundance of wealth by rapine and violence;—encouraging his followers in luxury and robbery, and becoming their instructor in evil courses; and that he walled the city which he had built, the better to secure their ill gotten wealth."

[b] Moses, confining himself chiefly to the line of of Seth, whence Noah was descended, has acquainted us with but very few particulars relating to that of Cain; insomuch that we cannot form any conjecture how long he, or any of his descendants lived [b].

It is recorded that Lamech, the fifth in descent from him, married two wives, Adah and Zillah; which is observed to be the first known instance of polygamy. By Adah he had two sons; Jabal, the elder, was the father of such as dwell in tents, and feed cattle; and Jubal, his brother, was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. By Zillah, the other wife, he had a son named Tubal Cain; an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.

This account, brief as it is, suggests such an idea of discovery and invention of mechanical arts, as, in those early annals of time, appears extraordinary.

We are assured by other historians,[x] and it is highly probable, that the posterity of Cain were enormously wicked; exceeding their father if possible in all manner of villanies; every

[x] Josephus's Antiq. lib. 1st. 2d Eutych, page 25. Ebor al amid, &c.

succeeding generation growing worse than the former.

This wicked race is supposed to be represented by Moses, under the designation of "men, and the daughters of men;" and the righteous family of Seth, by the appellation of "the sons of God."

The scripture account is: "To Seth there was born a son, and he called his name Enos;" about which time it is thought that his descendants, who were as eminent for virtue as those of Cain were for the reverse, were denominated as already mentioned; for it is conceived that those words which in our translation are rendered, "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," properly signify *then men began to be called by or after the name of the Lord,* as indeed the margin has it.

Of the three next descendants of Seth, Cainan, Mahalcel, and Jared; and of Methuselah, and Lamech, the grandfather, and father of Noah, Moses has recorded no more than their several ages. The Oriental authors commend them as they do Seth and Enos, for their piety, and the salutary injunctions they left behind them; forbidding their children all intercourse with the wicked race of Cain.

The extraordinary piety of Enoch, the son of Jared and father of Methuselah, is represented by the scripture phrase, of walking with God; as a reward for which exemplary deportment in so corrupt an age, he was taken up into heaven, as it is presumed, without tasting death.

"The history of Enoch," says Hunter, is comprised in three words, while the exploits of an Alexander, a Cæsar, and other destroyers of mankind, swell to many volumes. But what comparison is there between the bubble reputation bestowed by historians, poets, and orators, on the worthless and the wicked; and the solid praise conferred on the wise and good, by the Spirit of God: by whom actions are weighed, and who will at last bring every secret thing into judgment."

That Enoch was a prophet, and that some prophecy of his was preserved, either in writing or by tradition, even to our Saviour's time, appears from the passage quoted thence, in the general epistle of Jude. That there was a book under the name of Enoch, in the hands of the Jews, appears from its being referred to in their ancient book Zohar[x]. How long the

x Vide Heidegg Hist. Patr. tom. 1, p. 176.

descendants of Seth continued to be religious, and to imitate their father's virtues, is uncertain. Moses says: "When men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." Hence it appears, that the beginning of their corruption, was marrying into the wicked family of Cain; for, by that imprudent alliance, they became infected with the contagion of general profaneness and immorality.

Mankind running thus headlong into all manner of vice, wickedness increased until at length it overspread the earth: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually." Great indeed must have been the depravity, and very affecting, to excite language so strong as was used on this occasion: "And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." *Gen.* vi. 5, 6, 7.

But one man found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This extraordinary person, was Noah, the son of Lamech. At the time of his birth, great expectations were formed concerning him, and his father, directed by the spirit of prophecy, [k] bestows upon his son a [x] name significant of his future character and conduct; of the station he was to fill, and the purpose, which, in the order of Providence, he was to serve, when the world would arrive at such a pitch of irreligion and vice, that the earth would groan as it were under the curse, and under the violence and impiety of men.

It is declared of Noah, that he was "a just man, and perfect in his generation; and Noah walked with God." Of no character do the Scriptures speak more highly. The apostle Peter styles him a preacher of righteousness. He stemmed the torrent of iniquity, resisted the contagion of example, and preached by a holy dissent from the maxims and practices of an adulterous and sinful generation.[k]

He also testified against the prevailing dissoluteness and impiety, by his works, in the construction and fitting up of an ark: "By faith, Noah being warned of God, of things

[x] Comfort Rest.

not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Moses asserts that the earth was corrupt before God. and the earth was filled with violence, and all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

On taking a view of the different nations of the world at the present day, we may think that in not any of them are the inhabitants so generally depraved as the antediluvians appear to have been. But we do not know of any people, who are not under some sort of government; for that is implied in the acknowledgment of a superior. And we have not any reason to conclude that this was the situation of mankind before the flood; but, on the contrary, as when there was no king in Israel, and no magistrate in the land to put them to shame in any thing, that every man did what was right in his own eyes. In this respect, how great are our advantages compared with those of the antediluvians!

There had not been any preceding ages from which they might derive instruction; but we are furnished with the experience of

nearly 6000 years; not only with the law which was given by Moses, but with the superior light of the gospel, discovering to us new duties and new relations. We are taught that it is not enough to refrain from committing adultery, but that we should not even indulge a lustful thought; that it is not sufficient merely to forgive injuries, but that we should love our enemies, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that despitefully use and intreat us, that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Incitements so sublime, and the superadded restraints of laws, founded on a just definition of natural and civil rights, place us in a highly favourable situation. But with these awful sanctions and superior privileges, if there be amongst us, persons, who bid defiance to all obligations, moral and divine, then the general depravity of the antediluvians, who had not these advantages, should not be so much an occasion of surprise and astonishment, as an inducement to us duly to appreciate the favoured condition of a well regulated society. "No man," says Judge Blackstone[x],

[x] Commentaries, page 125.

"that considers for a moment, would wish to retain the absolute and uncontrolled power of doing whatsoever he pleased; the consequence of which would be, that every other man would also have the same power; and there could be no security to individuals in any of the enjoyments of life; therefore, political or civil liberty, which is that of a member of Society, is no other, than natural liberty so far restrained by human laws, and no further, as is necessary, and expedient for the general good of the public. Hence we may collect, that the law which restrains a man from doing mischief to his fellow citizens, though it diminishes the natural, increases the civil, liberty of mankind.

"And this species of legal obedience and conformity, is infinitely more desirable than that wild and savage liberty, which is sacrificed to obtain it." Experience then of the necessity of civil regulations first gave rise to laws. Until the inconvenience of being without any was felt, mankind would not be disposed to submit to restraint.

Judge Blackstone says: "When the Supreme Being formed the universe, and created matter out of nothing, He impressed certain principles upon that matter, from which it can never de-

part; and without which, it would cease to be. When he put that matter in motion, He established certain laws of motion, to which all moveable bodies must conform. And to descend from the greatest operations to the smallest, when a workman forms a clock, or other piece of mechanism, he establishes, at his own pleasure, certain arbitrary laws for its direction; as that the hand shall describe a given space in a given time; to which law, so long as the work conforms, so long it continues in perfection, and answers the end of its formation. Man, considered as a creature, must necessarily be subject to the laws of his Creator; for he is entirely a dependant being. He depends absolutely upon his Maker for every thing, it is therefore necessary that in all points he should conform to his Maker's will."

The almost total corruption of the antediluvians, furnishes a sad example to all succeeding generations, of the terrible consequences of an unbridled and uncontrouled indulgence of all the evil propensities of fallen nature. But it is important that even objects of detestation should be placed before the eyes of men, that depravity may be viewed in its own loathsomeness and deformity, to excite, if possible, aversion and disgust.

That this wicked race of men had been long striven with by the good Spirit of God in their hearts, in order to reclaim them from their excess of folly and iniquity, we may collect from the declaration of the Lord: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh;" a determination which ought to be had in remembrance by all men, in all ages, that they may not provoke the Most High until he take his Holy Spirit from them. The reason assigned for his withdrawing it from the antediluvians, is founded on the infinite disparity between a man, and his Maker. Shall dust and ashes contend with Him, before whom even the Seraphs hide their faces?

That the long suffering of God had waited for the repentance of this adulterous generation, all the time that the ark was preparing, appears from the testimony of the Apostle Peter; and this is supposed to be not less than 120 years.

Having been thus reproved, warned, and long borne with, but in vain; at length the day arrived, when the decree went forth: "The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth." They had wearied the Most High with their iniquities, and they were made an example to all generations of what

the wise king of Israel expresses: "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Here let us pause, and ask ourselves the question: Doth not the Judge of the whole earth do that which is right?

Shall a Being of infinite holiness, justice, and purity, suffer the creature which he hath made, to trample with impunity upon all his mercy, to set at nought all his counsels, and despise his reproof? That would be to relinquish the perfection of the divine nature, and to resign to man the moral government of the world. Had he not on an occasion so urgent, given some proof of his Omnipotence, so general and awful as to carry along with it, to all ages, the conviction that his power was irresistible; succeeding generations would spurn at his injunctions, and bid defiance to his authority. His justice was not more demonstrated than his wisdom, in making the deluge universal, that it might leave behind it, in all countries, some traces of the dreadfulness of the calamity. Taking to him his great power, and displaying for once the amplitude of it, rendered it unnecessary again to have recourse to means so terrible. But this revolution did not merely serve the purpose of inflicting a just judgment; it exhibited marvellous interposition, for the de-

liverance of those who trusted in the arm of Omnipotence. No evil shall befal those who make the Lord their refuge, and the Most High their habitation, neither shall any plague come nigh their dwelling. They need not fear the wreck of matter, nor the crush of worlds.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE ARK AND THE GENERAL DELUGE.

"WHEN the order for building the ark was given, Noah's three sons were all married, as we learn from the following passage: "But with thee will I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee."

Noah's attention was not to be diverted from the construction of the ark, either by the magnitude of the undertaking, or by the length of time it required; neither did the opposition of an unbelieving generation, discourage him from prosecuting a design, planned by infinite wisdom, and recommended by divine mercy.

C. 43.

Some calculators have made the burthen of the ark, considerably more than that of forty ships. What a vast unwieldy fabric, entrusted without mast, sail, rudder, or compass, to the

mercy of the waves! and which contained the hope of all future generations of the human race, and of the animal creation; with all necessary accommodations and provisions for more than a year.

We are now arrived at that memorable revolution, of which there are so many striking marks in the external appearance of the globe[x]; and of which there are such frequent and distinct intimations, in the traditional monuments and records of all the learned nations of antiquity: and of which we have such circumstantial and ample detail in the Scriptures.

The windows of heaven are opened, the rain descends in torrents, the barriers that confined the ocean to his appointed bed are removed, and the waters from beneath rise to meet the waters from above, and join their streams to avenge the cause of a holy and righteous Judge. The voice of mirth is heard no more, and all "the daughters of music are brought low." The wa-

x The discovery of the bodies of Elephants and Rhinocera in great masses, in Siberia, mixed with marine substances, has given rise to an opinion, that there was an irruption of waters from the southern ocean; no animals, or other substances belonging to the northern regions, having been found in southern latitudes.

ters prevailed until all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. Those who had rejected and despised the means of escape, when they had them in their power, perish in the sight of a place of security, which they cannot reach. Compare with these the feelings of Noah and his little family, within the ark. They enjoy a refuge provided by their Almighty Protector. What gratitude must arise to Him, what fervent love among themselves! What holy composure and rest in God! What sweet and satisfying meditations on his mercy, as well as awful reflections on the justice and severity of Jehovah!

"And all flesh died that moved upon the face of the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man; and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

"And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged." He who makes sphere to balance sphere, in the great system of nature, can make one element check and control the rage of another, in the subordinate economy of our little globe[k].

The floods prevailed 150 days, and after the end of them, the waters were abated.

The creation and the flood seemed almost to meet in the person of Methuselah, the son of Enoch; for he was cotemporary with Adam, for more than two centuries; and within a few days after his death, Noah was commanded to prepare for going into the ark. And in the history of Noah, the old and the new world, were connected together, notwithstanding the vast chasm of the deluge.

Noah came out of the ark, and all that were with him, after they had been confined there the space of one year and eleven days.

He gave proof of his gratitude for his preservation and deliverance: for his first concern was to sacrifice unto the Lord. The acceptableness of this act of devotion is thus testified: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite every living thing as I have done." The effect produced by the sun when in opposition to a watery cloud, was to be an assurance to them, that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. The bow was now to have a use and meaning unknown before; for "

said: "I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth[k]."

[c] This extinction of life by water, was designed to lessen the quantity of vice and profaneness, and to preserve and advance religion and virtue in the earth; the great end for which the earth and man in it, were created. This end it was adapted to obtain in the then present state of things, and in all future generations. In the present state of things, it prevented a total corruption; for if the whole tainted part had not been cut off, a single family, if not drawn in, might have been destroyed; and the divine purposes from the beginning of the world, have been defeated.

But, by reserving a select family for the continuation of the human species, a method was devised for the establishment of religion and virtue, in the new world. Noah was not, like Adam, a new, inexperienced being, ignorant of every thing but what he received from revelation. Noah, besides the benefit of revelation and intercourse with heaven, had the whole compass of antediluvian knowledge from the creation in his

own possession. He was a man of eminent abilities, and the most steady integrity. Adam was easily seduced, but Noah, in the midst of a universal degeneracy, firmly adhered to truth and religion. A man of such temper and understanding, would not fail to communicate all he knew, to his posterity, nor to inculcate it strongly upon their hearts.

Noah's family, Shem, Ham and Japheth, with their wives, were eye witnesses of the dreadful inundation, and had the most affecting proof of their own deliverance. They resided full twelve months in the ark; and it is easy to conceive how they would be affected in so moving a situation. They knew this shocking catastrophe was not a fortuitous accident, but occasioned by the wickedness of the world; therefore all the terrors of the deluge, must give them the most sensible perception of the malignant nature of iniquity, that it is highly offensive to God, and dreadfully pernicious to sinners. They must be convinced of the uncontrolable power and dominion of the Most High; the impossibility of escaping his vengeance; what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands; and how much they were obliged, both in interest and in duty, to reverence and obey Him.

On the other hand, their preservation from so terrible a calamity in the midst of the ruin of all the world besides, must be a very striking demonstration of God's favour and compassion to themselves, which was naturally adapted to make the deepest impressions of gratitude, love, and duty; especially as they could not but be sensible that such a great and miraculous deliverance, was particularly owing to the eminent piety of their father. *Gen. vii.* 1.

Thus they would be well prepared and disposed to acknowledge and admit the excellency of those priniples and practices, which had been, through divine goodness, their security in the general desolation. And when they left the ark, all the dismal appearances of the desolate world, the ruin of cities, towns and buildings; the sadly changed face of countries which they had seen in a cultivated state; the bones of men, and other animals, strewed over the face of the earth, would have a natural tendency, to fix upon their minds the good impressions they had received in the ark; and render them solicitous to inculcate the principles of religion upon their children.

In addition to all this, Noah, who lived 349 years after the flood, and whose pious admonitions would be of much greater weight and authority, than when he was an unsuccessful preacher

of righteousness to the antediluvians, was the instructor, and, for some time at least, the governor of the new world. From all this, it will appear that this was a just and proper dispensation for reforming mankind, and well adapted to that thoughtless age, and to the state of things in it, when no regular civil government and laws, were formed for the administration of justice, and the restraint of injuries and wrong. And it appears to have had the intended effect, by suppressing violence and rapine, which never any more universally prevailed in the world.

[e] The leaving of mankind, in the first ages of the world, in that loose, discretionary state, was certainly not to lead them into wickedness, but to teach them, by experience, the necessity of laws and government; and the reasonableness of submitting to them. Nor could government, in fact, be permanently established until the ruin of the world without it, demonstrated the necessity of it.[e]

As, at the creation, dominion was given to Adam over all other creatures, so now, when the world is to be re-peopled, the whole animal creation, is a-fresh subjected to the power and authority of man: "And the fear of you, and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon

all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered."

And now, for the first time, we read of the flesh of animals being permitted unto man, for his food. And that the replenishing of the earth might not be frustrated by manslaughter, the declaration is now made, for the first time: "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."

One great proof of the genuineness of the sacred writings is, that they exhibit the failings of the most illustrious persons with the same simplicity, exactness, and precision, as they record their most honourable and dignified conduct.

And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard.

He who had raised, sheltered, and pruned the vine, was doubtless entitled to reap the clusters. Eaten from the tree, or dried in the sun, the fruit was simple and nutritious, like the grain from the stalk; but being pressed out and fermented, it possessed a quality unheard of before; it acquired fiery force, mounted to the brain, led reason captive, and overpowered every faculty.

Noah awakes from his wine, and meets the knowledge of his intemperance in what his sons had done unto him.

The modesty and dutifulness of two of Noah's sons, exhibit a lovely and instructive example to youth, of care to conceal the infirmity of their father.

In consequence of their piety and obedience to their parent, a blessing is conferred upon Shem and Japheth; whilst Ham's disrespectful and indecent behaviour towards his father, is punished by a lasting curse upon his offspring.

Noah survived that great destruction, the deluge, 350 years; and lived to instruct a new race of men in the knowledge, the love, and the worship of the true God.

He lives to see his progeny increased, multiplying and spreading on every side; lives to exhibit to a short lived race of mortals an example of patriarchal dignity and longevity, and dies at the age of 950 years, only nineteen years less than the life of Methuselah[k].

[e] And now, having arrived at the period in which Moses begins his genealogies, it is proper to consider how far we are advanced in the age of the world.

In the 5th chapter of Genesis, he gives the names and ages of the patriarchs, from Adam

to Noah, together with the age of every father, at the time when every son was born. If we add together the ages of the fathers, when the several sons were born, and the years of Noah's life at the time of the deluge, we shall form chronologies of the best authority, from the creation to the deluge: for which purpose we shall subjoin to this chapter five tables. According to Table I. if we add together the years from the creation of Adam to the birth of Methuselah, we

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES.

PROOFS.	TABLE I.	YRS.	TAB. II.	TAB. III.	TAB. IV.	Tab. v.
Gen. V.	3, Adam lived	130	1	930	Yrs	Yrs
.....	6, Seth lived	105	130	912	800	..
.....	9, Enos lived	90	235	905	695	8
.....	12, Cainan lived	70	325	910	605	179
.....	15, Mahalaleel lived .	65	395	895	535	234
.....	18, Jared lived	162	460	962	470	366
.....	21, Enoch lived	65	622	365	365	..
.....	25, Methuselah lived	187	687	969	243	600
.....	28, Lamech lived ..	182	874	777	56	595
.. VII	1, Noah at the Deluge, 600 years old		1056			

Before the birth of — Born in yr. of World — Lived in all years — Lived with *Adam* — Lived with *Noah*

In all 1656 years from the Creation to the Flood; and from the flood to the Christian era, 2348 years.

The Creation of Adam was 4004 years before the Christian era.

shall find that Adam was 687 years old when Methuselah was born; and as Adam lived in all 930 years, as in Table III. if we subtract 687 from 930, there will remain 243; which is the year of Methuselah's life when Adam died. Therefore Methuselah lived 243 years with Adam.

In the same way of computation, may be found out how long any of the junior patriarchs lived with Adam as in Table IV.

From this account, Methuselah lived with Adam 243 years, and doubtless conversed with him the greater part of the time; and so had opportunity abundantly sufficient, to receive from Adam an account of what he knew concerning the creation, and all the transactions and events, contained in the first four chapters of Genesis.

And as Noah lived 600 years with Methuselah, he had time sufficient to learn the same account from him, and may well be supposed to have carried it with him entire into the ark. This may be one probable reason for the longevity of the antediluvians; they lived so long, in order to preserve and hand down to posterity religious knowledge, in that period of time when it could not be committed to writing; and when it would have been totally lost, or miserably depraved, had men lived no longer than 70, or 80 years. Be-

sides, their longevity contributed to the more speedy peopling of the world, and to bringing forward the necessary arts of agriculture, building[e], &c. &c.

Into what a little measure shrinks the whole history of man previously to the flood, though a period of no less than 1656 years! But short as the account is, it discovers to us that of which other histories are ignorant.

[h] They, instead of giving a clear and distinct idea of the Godhead, render it obscure; dishonour and disfigure it by numberless extravagant fables, differing from one another in a greater or less degree of absurdity.

Sacred history begins with clearly revealing to us in a few words, the greatest and most important truths: that there is a God, pre-existing before all things, and that the world is the work of his hands. It then represents man, for whom this world was made, as coming forth from the hands of his Creator, and compounded of a body and a soul; a body made out of a little dust, the proof of its weakness; and a soul breathed into it by God himself, and consequently distinct from the body; spiritual, intelligent, and, from the very substance of its nature and constitution, incorruptible and immortal.

It describes the happy condition in which man was created: righteous, and innocent, designed for eternal happiness, had he persevered in righteousness and innocence. It also describes his sad fall by sin, the source of all his misery; and the two-fold death to which he was condemned by all his posterity.

But it opens the cheering prospect of future restoration by an all powerful Mediator, which was even then promised, and pointed out, though at the distance of a remote futurity.

We see the Most High, who is always watchful over the works of his own hands, from the earliest times, preparing, at a distance, the formation of the christian church, by making the first Adam, as the Apostle Paul expresses it, the figure of the second; by inculcating the essence of religion, the spirit of true worship; by transmitting from age to age without alteration, these capital doctrines, through the medium of the long lives of the first Patriarchs, who were full of faith, and holiness; by taking care through the means of the ark to preserve these essential truths from perishing in the deluge; and by forming from the beginning a society of just men, more or less numerous, or visible, and preserving their example by an uninterrupted succession.

This is what the scripture account teaches, being the depository of the divine revelations, and of the manifestations of God's decrees, which lay concealed in his bosom from all eternity, till he saw meet to divulge them, "And can any object be greater, of nearer concern, or more worthy the attention of mankind, than an history, the plan of which is drawn by God himself."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PREDICTIONS OF NOAH.

ONE of the strongest evidences of divine authority for the accounts transmitted to us, of the various dispensations of God, to mankind, in different ages of the world, is the series of Prophecies which are recorded in the Old and New Testaments.

The vastness of the scale on which some of these have been calculated, requiring thousands of years for their accomplishment, fills the mind with astonishment, at the grandeur of the design; but perhaps the power of an Almighty Architect, is not more displayed herein, than his wisdom, in directing that some part of the process for the accomplishment of his plan, should be carrying on in every age, to put to silence the objections of infidels throughout all generations.

Noah, having been a preacher of righteousness to the old or antediluvian world, having obeyed the voice of the Lord, in building the ark; thereby giving proof of his faith and confidence in Almighty Goodness, was now endued with the spirit of prophecy; and enabled to disclose, in some degree, the purposes of Divine Providence towards the future race of mankind.

By his sons, the whole earth was to be peopled after the flood; and with him that remarkable prophecy commenced, which has been fulfilling through the several periods of time to this day.

God, foreseeing that the impiety which began in Ham, would greatly increase in his family, commissioned Noah to pronounce a curse upon it. It must have been some mortification and punishment to Ham, for his mockery and cruelty to his father, to hear of the malediction and servitude of some of his children; and, at the same time, some comfort and reward to Shem and Japheth, for their reverence and tenderness to their father, to hear of the blessing and enlargement of their posterity. Noah's prophecy was delivered, as most of the ancient prophecies were delivered, in metres, for the help of the memory; and it may be thus translated:—

x See the proof of this in Bishop Lowth's Poetical Prælections.

Cursed be Canaan,
A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.
Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem;
And Canaan shall be their servant.
God shall enlarge Japheth,
And shall dwell in the tents of Shem;
And Canaan shall be their servant.

It is plain this account was written by Moses for the encouragement of the Israelties, to support and animate them in their expedition against a people, who by their sins, had forfeited divine protection, and were to be assigned to slavery. Herein the purport and meaning of the prophecy is obvious; now let us attend to the completion of it.

"*Cursed be Canaan.*"

"The Canaanites were an abominably wicked people: the sin and punishment of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities of the plain, are too well known to be particularly specified; and as for the other inhabitants of the land which was promised to Abram and his seed, God bore with them, *till their iniquity was full. Gen.* xv. 16. They were not only addicted to idolatry, which was then the case of the greater part of the world, but were guilty of the greatest enormities in idolatry: "*for every abomination to*

the Lord which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters, have they burned in the fire to their gods." *Deut.* xii. 31. And it appears by the 18th and 20th chapters of Leviticus, that unlawful marriages, witchcraft, adultery, incest, sodomy, and beastiality, were common and frequent among them. Divine judgments were, therefore, justly inflicted on such a people and nation.

Moses takes care to inform the Israelites it was not for their righteousness the Lord brought them in to possess the land; but for the wickedness of those nations, did the Lord drive them out. *Deut.* ix. 4. And he would have driven out the Israelites in like manner, for the same abominations: *"Defile not you yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled, therefore do I visit the iniquities thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out its inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations. That the land spue not you out also, when you defile it; as it spued out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them, shall be cut off from among their people."* *Levit.* xviii. 24.

But the curse particularly implies servitude and subjection:

"Cursed be Canaan,
A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

It is very well known that the word brethren, in Hebrew, comprehends more distant relations. The descendants of Canaan were, therefore to be subject to the descendants both of Shem and Japheth; and the natural consequences of vice in communities, as well as in single persons, is slavery. It was several centuries after the delivery of this prophecy, when the Israelites, who were the descendants of Shem, under the command of Joshua, invaded the Canaanites, smote above thirty of their kings, took possession of their land, and made the Gibeonites and others, servants and tributaries.

Solomon afterwards subdued the rest: *"As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which were not of Israel, but of their children who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute unto this day. But of the children of Israel, did Solomon make no servants*

for his work but they were men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots, and horsemen." *2 Chron.* viii. 7, 8, 9.

The Greeks and Romans too, who were descendants of Japheth, not only subdued Syria, and Palastine, but also pursued and conquered such of the Canaanites as were any where remaining; as for instance, the Tyrians and Carthagenians; the former of whom were ruined by Alexander and the Grecians; and the latter by Scipio and the Romans. And ever since, the miserable remainder of this people, have been slaves to a foreign yoke; first to the Saracens, who descended from Shem: and afterwards to the Turks, who descended from Japheth; and they groan under their dominion at this day. Egypt was the land of Ham, as it is often called in Scripture; and, for many ages, it was a great and flourishing kingdom; but it was subdued by the Persians, who descended from Shem; and afterwards by the Grecians, who descended from Japheth; and from that time to this, it hath constantly been in subjection to some or other of the posterity of Shem or Japheth.

The whole continent of Africa, was principally peopled by the children of Ham[x]; and for how

[x] "Ham," says Dr. Hales, "signifies burnt or black; and this name was peculiarly significant of regions allotted to his family." Adam Clarke.

many ages have the better parts of that country been successively under the dominion of the Romans, and the Saracens, and now of the Turks! In what ignorance, barbarity, slavery, and misery, live most of the inhabitants! And how many thousands of the poor Negroes, have been annually sold and bought like cattle in the market, and conveyed from one quarter of the world to another, to do the work of beasts!

Nothing can be more complete than the execution of this sentence upon Ham, as also upon Canaan[1].

It is clear, from various parts of the Scriptures, that when the wickedness of a nation or people, has occasioned the divine protection to be withdrawn from them, they have become an easy prey to their enemies. It is not however less obvious, from the sacred page, that the Judge of all the earth, will not acquit those, who, in the wanton exercise of power, gratify unreasonable and merciless dispositions; not even when those whom they unjustly oppress or cruelly entreat, are offenders in his sight, and worthy of punishment.

The prediction concerning Ham or Canaan, foretold the condition of his posterity; but it does not warrant the cruelties with which the hand of man has executed, and highly aggravated the sentence. Was not the prophecy most amply

fulfilled by Heathen nations? And may it not be said of Christians, because of the rapine promoted amongst this people, the unjust bondage and oppression in which they are held, and the direful consequences of their captivity: "Ye have slain them in a rage, which reaches up unto Heaven!"

Now let us consider the promises made to Shem and Japheth; and Noah said:

"Blessed be the God of Shem;
And Canaan shall be his servant."

Or rather, "*and Canaan shall be servant to them, or their servant,*" that is to his brethren; for that, as has been before observed, is the main part of the prophecy, being frequently repeated. We may observe, that the old Patriarch doth not say: *blessed be Shem,* as he said: *cursed be Canaan;* for men's evil springeth of themselves; but their good from the fountain of all goodness: he therefore, in a strain of devotion, breaketh forth into thanksgiving to God, as the author of all good to Shem. Neither doth he say the same to Japheth; for certainly an Omniscient Being may dispense his particular favours according to his good pleasure; and salvation was to be derived to mankind through Shem and his posterity.

God prefers[x] Shem to his elder brother Japheth, as Jacob was afterwards preferred to Essau, and David to his elder brothers; to show that the order of grace supercedes the order of nature.

The Lord being called, the *God of Shem*, particularly, it is plainly intimated that the Lord would be his God in a particular manner. And accordingly the church of God was among the posterity of Shem for several generations, and of them, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came." *Rom.* ix. 5.

But Japheth was not dismissed without a promise:

"God shall enlarge Japheth,
And shall dwell in the tents of Shem;
And Canaan shall be their servant."

Was Japheth then more enlarged than the rest? Yes, he was, both in territory and children. The territories of Japheth's posterity were indeed very large; for, besides all Europe[x], they possessed the lesser Asia, Media, part of Armenia, Iberia, Albania, and those vast regions towards

x Shem signifies name or renown; his was great in a spiritual sense, as he was to be the lineal ancestor of the blessed seed of the woman. Adam Clarke.

x Bocharti, Phaleg, Lib. 3, Cap 1.

the north, which anciently the Scythians inhabited, and now the Tartars inhabit; and it is not improbable that America was peopled, by some or other of his descendants passing thither by the straits of Anian.

The enlargement of Japheth[x] may also denote a numerous progeny, as well as an ample territory; and according to the genealogy of the three brothers, Japheth had seven sons, Ham had only four, and Shem only five.

The following clause: "*he shall dwell in the tents of Shem,*" will admit of a double construction; for thereby may be meant, either that God, or that Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem. They who prefer the former construction seem to have the authority of the original text on their side; for there is no other noun to govern the verbs in the period, but God. There is no pronoun in the Hebrew, answering to the "he," which is inserted in our English translation; and the whole sentence would run thus: "God will enlarge Japheth, and will dwell in the tents of Shem." And the Chaldee of Onkelos also thus paraphraseth it: "And will make his glory to dwell in the tents of

x Japheth signifies enlargement. And his posterity spread throughout the whole extent of Asia. They probably crossed Berings' straits to America, and, in the opposite direction, passed throughout Europe to the Mediterranean sea.

Shem." They who prefer the latter construction, seem to have done it, that they might refer the 27th verse, wholly to Japheth; as they refer the 26th wholly to Shem; but the other appears the more natural and easy construction. Taken in either sense, the prophecy hath been most punctually fulfilled. In the former sense, it was fulfilled literally, when the Shechina or Divine Presence rested on the ark, and dwelt in the tabernacle, and in the temple of the Jews. And when the Word who was with God, and was God, took our nature upon Him, and dwelt among us.

In the latter sense it was fulfilled, first, when the Greeks and Romans, who sprung from Japheth, subdued and possessed Judea, and other countries of Asia, belonging to Shem; and again, spiritually, when they were proselyted to the true religion; and they who were not Israelites by birth, became Israelites by faith; and lived, as we and many others of Japheth's posterity do at this day, within the pale of the church of Christ.

Is not this a most extraordinary prophecy? A prophecy both wonderful and instructive, which was delivered nearly 4000 years ago, and yet hath been fulfilling through the several periods of time, to this day!!

CHAPTER IX.

THE BUILDING OF BABEL.—THE CALLING OF ABRAM.

WE have seen the close of the first great period of the world; there next ensues a considerable space of time, in which we are presented with little more than a general view of the genealogical succession of the sons of Noah; from the flood to the calling of Abram.

It may be presumed that, for a considerable time, the recent horrors of the deluge would impress their minds, having before their eyes the awful monuments of its ravages; and might confine them to the mountainous regions of Armenia, where the ark first rested; but, as their numbers increased, and their fears diminished, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plains washed by the Tigris and the Euphrates, they descended from the heights, and spread along the vast and fruitful vallies of Shinar, or Chaldea: "And the

whole earth was of one language and of one speech: and it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there." *Gen.* xi. 1. B. C. 2247. He who had seen the human race cut off for their wickedness, his own family, consisting of eight persons, only excepted, lived to see the descendants of that family almost as numerous and as profligate, as the generations of men which had been destroyed by the flood.

He had the mortification, in particular, to see his posterity engaged in an enterprize, absurd, vain, and impious; that of building a city or tower, whose top might reach unto heaven, to transmit their names with renown to posterity; and to be the great seat of empire; and thereby the means of preserving them in one grand system of political union, and of securing them from discord and dispersion: But the means which they had vainly devised to keep themselves together, proved, in the ordering of Divine Wisdom, the means of separating and scattering them. He who foresaw the mischievous effects of such an attempt, determined to frustrate it. By their scheme, a great part of the earth must have been for a long time uninhabited, and overrun with wild beasts; which, after their dispersion, according to ancient authors, for a long

time exercised the industry and valour, of the primitive heroes, in hunting and subduing them. It was thus Nimrod gained his renown: "He was a mighty hunter before the Lord." *Gen.* x. 9.

[h]Thus the contagion of wickedness for some time at least, had bounds set to it; evil example was confined, and could not easily stretch beyond the limits of one country; nor could wicked projects be carried on with universal concurrence, by many little colonies, when separated by the natural boundaries of mountains, rivers, deserts, and seas; and hindered from associating together by a variety of languages, unintelligible to each other.

What we have already seen of the history of the world, may inspire confidence in Divine wisdom and power, by the representations of the constant, seasonable, and suitable interposition of Providence, according to the various exigencies of mankind. The wicked are continually aiming at defacing his image, and marring his work, but they cannot prevail. The purposes of Omnipotence and mercy are not to be defeated by the united efforts of the powers of darkness.

This dispensation therefore was calculated to prevent a second universal degeneracy:

God therein dealing with men as rational agents; and suiting his scheme to their present state and circumstances.[h]

This dispersion probably happened about 240 years after the flood. In this early record, we are informed that by the sons of Japheth "were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands, every one after his tongue, after their families in their nations."

"Of the sons of Ham, was Nimrod the mighty hunter. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Ashur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah, the same is a great city."

When, after their fruitless endeavours to build the tower of Babel, they were divided, and dispersed into different countries, the diversity of language and of habitations, occasioned distinct societies to be formed, which would admit of some internal regulations, to restrain the outrage of violence and rapine.

The chief design of Moses being to record what particularly concerned the Israelites, he has given us the genealogy of the line of Shem only entire. As to the descendants of the other

two sons of Noah, his intention seems to have been to bring them down so low as the dispersion, in order to leave to posterity the names of the first founders of empire, and then to dismiss them; for it is observable he hath deduced the genealogy of the branch of Ham no further.

"There is nothing in the short history of Nimrod carrying the least air of reproach, except his name, which signifies a rebel; and *that* circumstance seems to have occasioned the injurious opinions which have been entertained of him in all ages. Nimrod is generally thought to have been the first king after the flood. The four cities which Moses gave to Nimrod, made a large kingdom in those early times, when few kings had more than one city. Only it must be observed that possessions at first might have been large, and afterwards divided into several parcels; and Nimrod being the leader of a nation, we may suppose his subjects settled within those limits. The scripture does not inform us, when Nimrod began to reign; some date it before the dispersion, but such conjectures do not seem to correspond with the Mosaical history. For before the dispersion we read of only one city, besides Babel, nor could there be well more while all mankind were yet in a body together. But when Nimrod assumed regal power, there seems

to have been other cities built, which shows that it was a good while after the dispersion. [e]

[b] It is probable there was only one language before the flood; but what particular language it was which the first progenitors of mankind spoke, cannot be determined. Many nations have laid claim to the honour of having the first language. But if the Hebrew tongue cannot make good its claim, we may, without taking pains to refute what has been said in favour of other pretenders, conclude, that the primitive language was entirely lost at Babel; at least, that no one can tell where it was preserved.

Some learned men have endeavoured to derive all languages from the Hebrew, which they imagine to be the parent of all others.

That they should succeed in finding a great conformity between that and the other oriental tongues, is no wonder; since they manifestly sprung from one common original; though it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the mother from the daughters.

That they have also given tolerable satisfaction, in deducing from the same tongue several words, not only in the Greek, and Latin, but in some other European languages, is not matter of much surprise; considering the great inter-

course which several nations of our Continent had with the Phænicians, whose mother tongue was the Hebrew. [b]

Doctor Johnson, speaking of the origin of language, says: "It must have come by inspiration; a thousand, nay, a million of children could not invent a language."

The elegant Author of the Elements of General Knowledge, beautifully remarks: "The only rational and satisfactory method of solving the difficulty, is, to refer the origin of speech to the Great Creator himself. Not that it is necessary to suppose that He inspired the first parents of mankind, with any particular original or primitive language; but that he made them fully sensible of the power with which they were endued, of forming articulate sounds, gave them an impulse to exert it, and left the arbitrary imposition of words to their own choice. Their ingenuity was left to itself to multiply names, as new objects occurred to their observation; and thus language was gradually advanced, in process of time, to the different degrees of copiousness and refinement, which it has reached among various nations.

"This theory is conformable to the description given in the sacred writings, and agrees, very remarkably, with the opinions to be col-

lected from profane history. Plato mentions, that the original language of man was of divine formation; and, when he divides words into two classes, the primitive, and the derivative, he attributes the latter to the ingenuity of man, the former to the immediate communication of the Supreme Being. To whatever part of the globe we direct our view, we shall find additional reasons to conclude that all the languages now spoken in the world, were derived originally from one and the same source. All the present languages of Europe, amounting to about twenty seven, may be traced to the Latin, German, and Sclavonian. But when we observe the words used in one quarter of the globe, are like those in another which is very remote; and that such words have exactly the same signification, and were so used long before the present inhabitants had any intercourse with each other, how is this to be accounted for? Whence arises the affinity, in some remarkable instances, between the Greek, and Hebrew; Greek, and Sanscrit; Greek, and Chinese; English, and Arabian; Latin, and Otaheitean; Latin, and Turkish; and English, and Persian?

"The word, *sack*, has undergone little variation in language, either ancient, or modern. It

is nearly the same in Hebrew, Greek, Teutonic, Gælic, Welsh, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English."

The judicious author of the foregoing observations, has selected a number of words which run through a variety of the languages mentioned; and several of them have the better claim to being reputed of very high antiquity, if not antediluvian; because it is so extremely difficult to trace any modern intercourse between the nations that use them.

"Not only," says he, "the construction and formation of the English and Persian languages are remarkably similar, but there are many words wholly or nearly alike. Thus *sukar*, is sugar; *shireen*, a syren: *bad*, bad; *burden*, to bear; *lib*, lip; *jamin*, jessamine; *best*, best; *nam*, a name; *ain*, or *ein*, the eye," &c. &c.

Kett says: "I could show the coincidence, in many points, between Greek and Sanscrit; between the dialect of the Hebrides, and the remote language of China; but the limited nature of my plan, makes it necessary to refer such of my Readers as are desirous of pursuing this curious investigation, to the learned works of Sammes, Pezron, Junius, Skinner, and Parkhurst; to Rowland's Mona, and Williams's Primitive Christianity.

"The identity, or near resemblance of names which denote the same ideas; and those ideas, some of the most striking and important to mankind in every age of society, seems to point to the same source. It seems highly probable therefore, that one original fountain of speech, and one only, has produced not only those various streams of diction, such as the Celtic, that have been long dried up; but supplied those likewise, such as the languages of modern Europe, that still continue to flow. Hence the history recorded by Moses, of the primeval race of men speaking one language, and afterwards being dispersed in consequence of the confusion of tongues, receives strong confirmation. These are facts which furnish the best reasons for the uniformity we have noticed; and they could not on any other principle be accounted for in a manner so satisfactory, or so consistent with the tenour of Ancient History."

The posterity of Shem are twice recited by Moses. In the first place he only mentions the names of such of his descendants as were concerned in the first dispersion; in the other, he delivers the genealogy, in the line of Arphaxad, down to Abram. The Scripture has recorded no one action of any of the sons of Shem, except that of Ashur going out of the land of

Shinar, and building Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen, between Nineveh and Calah, the same is a great city; but this is very material information, as it fixes the true time of the foundation of the Assyrian Empire.

Terah the son of Nahor was the father of Abram, the founder of the Hebrew, or Jewish nation. Scripture informs us that Terah, after the seventieth year of his age, had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran; but of these sons, Haran died before his father in his native country, in Ur, of the Chaldees; leaving a son, Lot, and two daughters, Milcah and Iscah. Nahor married Milcah; and Abram married Sarai his half-sister. It may be proper to observe, in entering upon the history of the great patriarch, that one life, that of Noah, almost connected Adam with Abram. For Noah was born only 126 years after the death of Adam; and lived to within two years of Abram's birth. In one sense therefore, the father and founder of the Jewish nation, was very little more than the third from the first man; so readily and uninterruptedly might the knowledge of important truths be communicated, through so long a tract of time.

But we have henceforward to be conversant with lives reduced nearer to our own standard. While longevity was necessary to carry on the designs of Providence, men lived to the age of many centuries. When written and permanent revelation, was to be substituted for oral tradition from father to son, the life of mankind was to be shortened.

[k] The history of Abram's life does not commence till the 75th year of his age; but though he was so advanced before he is introduced to our notice, the obscurity that lies upon his earlier years, is amply compensated by the rich and instructive materials furnished, from the divine stores, for the history of the latter part of his life[k]. The design of the Bible being not so much to convey to us natural and political knowledge, as the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent; we find that the history of the father of the faithful, occupies a larger space in the sacred volume, than that of the whole human race from the creation down to his day. Hitherto we have had rather a sketch of character, than exact delineation of the human heart; hints respecting remote important events, rather than an exact and connected narrative of facts. But the inspired penman has gone

into a detail of Abram's life, from his being called of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, to the day of his death, including the space of 100 years.

"There is something singularly affecting in the idea of an old man giving up the scenes of his youthful days, endeared to his mind by the recollection of past joys; foregoing his kindred and his friends; becoming an exile and a wanderer, at a period, when nature seeks repose, and the heart cleaves to those objects to which it hath been long accustomed. But he who makes the Most High his habitation, hath support under all privations. Accordingly Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Abram is held forth in scripture, as the pattern of a cheerful, prompt, and active faith in God; as we proceed, we shall mark the appearances, and the effects of that faith, in the successive trials to which he was exposed. The very first act of obedience to divine command, proves the existence and the prevalence of this powerful principle.

Ur of the Chaldees was become a land of idolatry; his nearest relations had lost the

knowledge, and deviated from the true worship, of the God of their fathers; and to have continued there, would have been to prefer a situation dangerous to religion and virtue.

When men are to receive immediately an indemnification or equivalent, the merit of a surrender is small; but it requires the faith and trust of an Abram, to take a general promise only, as a security, and the accomplishment of it at a great distance; and also to struggle with difficulties insurmountable; for natural impossibilities seemed to bar the way, and cut off all hope of his having children. A just tribute of approbation is bestowed upon this part of his conduct; he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness; because that against hope he believed in hope. We shall find however that the promise contained every thing that could rouse a noble and generous mind: "I will bless thee, and make thy name great; I will make of thee a great nation; in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

The illustrious exile turned his back on home, attended only by his aged parent, sinking under the weight of years, and infirmities; his beloved Sarai, and Lot, his nephew, who was determined not to be separated from his uncle, but with him

to sacrifice every worldly consideration to religion.

Being arrived in Canaan, God appears unto Abram again, and informs him, that this was the land which he had in view for him; and renews the declaration: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." In these words, two things are remarkable; first, a further delay of the accomplishment of the promise: "I will give;" and secondly, a transferring of the gift from Abram himself, unto his seed. Each of them was sufficient to have cooled an ordinary ardour, to have discouraged an ordinary spirit; but the Patriarch discovers no symptom of dissatisfaction, or disappointment; he does not so much as enquire when, or how, the promised offspring was to arise; but being blessed, we may conclude, with the Divine Presence in his pilgrimage, even hope deferred, maketh not the heart sick. Though he finds no city nor house to dwell in; yet there he builded an altar unto the Lord, who had appeared unto him. But behold him, after this, removing from place to place, sojourning in the land of promise, as in a strange land; travelling to Sichem, and to the plain of Moreh, and from thence to Bethel, and Hai; probably through fear of the idolatrous Canaanites, who, we are told, then occupied the land.

But a wandering life through the land of Canaan, is not the worst of his condition; his faith is put to a new and severer trial; he is driven out of that land by famine. The country promised as a portion to his seed, refuses subsistence to his family in its present diminutive state; he therefore went down into Egypt, which the scarcity had not reached, or but in an inferior degree. On his return from thence to Canaan, he resorts to his former residence between Bethel and Hai; and pitches his tent by the place of the altar, which he had made there, at the first; and there he renews his communion with the Lord God, who had thus safely brought him back. His worldly substance had now greatly increased, being, no doubt, under the Divine blessing; his brother's son had cast in his lot with him, and was cherished by him, with singular tenderness and affection, when, behold! the increase of riches became a source of vexation. Though the masters are disposed to agree, the servants, now become numerous, cannot. A strife arose between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle; and what augmented the folly of such a contention, was, the Canaanites and Perizzites dwelling in the land, they rendered themselves more vulnerable to the common enemy.

The conduct of Abram on this occasion merits particular notice: "And Abram said unto Lot, let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between thy herdsmen, and my herdsmen; for we are brethren. Separate thyself I pray thee from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Sermons preached or volumes written, in favour of a peaceable, gentle, yielding, generous, and manly spirit, could not have exceeded this plain and persuasive lesson, taught us by the conduct of the Patriarch.

Here let us pause, who are called Christians, and ask ourselves whether we are actuated by the spirit of faithful Abram.

What sacrifices are we making, what sacrifice have we made, to conscience, to duty, to our Christian profession? What worldly interest have we given up? What exercise of self-denial, of self-government, have we been engaged in? To be lovers of the world, more than of God, is to prefer Ur of the Chaldees, with its impurity and idolatry, to the worship of the living and the true God.

Had Abram an altar for God, before he had a habitation for himself? Learn from him, O! young man, how to begin the world, so as to

thrive and prosper in it. Make room for thy Maker, and he will settle thee in a large place.

Did Abram rule his own spirit? Did he meekly recede from his just right? Did he yield to an inferior for the sake of peace.

Blush, O! man, to think of thy pride, and selfishness; of thy positiveness in opinion, thy devotedness to interest, thy insolence in the day of power; thy contempt of the opinions, thy indifference to the feelings and the happiness of others. Look to Abram, and learn to be a conqueror[k]. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

CHAPTER X.

ABRAM.

MOSES marks with precision the life of the father of the faithful; unfolds his character on a variety of trying and interesting occasions; and discloses the operations of a mind adorned with many virtues and excellencies, though certainly not exempt from some imperfections.

What renders the history of the patriarch particularly useful and instructive, is, the exhibition of private life presented to us, and the lessons of wisdom and virtue taught therein.

"The intrigues of a court," says Hunter, "the operations of a campaign, the consequences of a battle, and the prowess of a hero, when skilfully represented, may dazzle a reader who hears not the groans of the dying, who sees not the dead, with their garments rolled in blood; who hears not the widow's and the orphan's moans: but, to forbear and to forgive; to practice generosity,

justice, and mercy; to speak truth, and to show kindness; to melt with pity, and glow with affection, is to conduce to the improvement of human nature," and has a direct tendency to ameliorate the condition of mankind.

When we behold men of like passions with ourselves, placed in situations similar to our own, practising virtues within our reach; discovering a temper and disposition, which, if we please to cultivate, we may attain; then, if we read not with profit, as well as delight, it must be, not because we want the power, but the inclination to improve.

Though Abram is but a pilgrim in Canaan, yet he thrives and prospers there. As the pious seek and find means of intercourse with Heaven, in every condition of life, so their Father who is in heaven, who suffers none eventually to lose by fidelity and attachment to Him, can render the most untoward and dangerous condition, productive of a blessing; "If a man's ways please the Lord, he makes his enemies to be at peace with him." Behold! Abram and his Nephew are constrained to separate; nature, affection, religion, affliction, had all combined to unite them; but they were become so rich in silver, and in gold, and in cattle, "that the land was

not able to bear them, that they might dwell together."

The power of choosing a situation was given to Lot; and "he lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord; like the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east, and they separated themselves one from the other.

"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered."

The idea of property, one's own home, his own field, his own flock, is no doubt pleasing; but if any thing can add to the satisfaction of this kind of possession, it is the acquiring of it honorably, and having the capacity of enjoying it with cheerfulness and moderation.

Dishonest gain never can bestow contentment, and seldom descends to a remote heir. But the

gratification of honest property and success, is unspeakably heightened and sweetened by the composing consideration, that the blessing is the gift of God, the pledge of his paternal love.

Under circumstances so favourable, did the patriarch inhabit the plain of Mamre, blessed in the present, more blessed in the prospect of futurity; blessed in the fulness of this world, more blessed in the favour of God, which is better than life; blessed in the promise of a numerous, and prosperous offspring, but yet more blessed in the promise of that Holy Seed, in which all the families of the earth are blessed.

In the 14th chapter, we have the history of a powerful confederacy of four kings against five; founded, no doubt, as all such confederacies are, in a lust of power, or directed by a spirit of cruelty and revenge. It issues in a bloody conflict in the vale of Siddim. Sodom becomes a prey to the conqueror; and Lot himself is made prisoner, and his goods are plundered.

Abram, roused by the intelligence of his nephew's distress, flies instantly to his relief? What shall we most admire on this occasion? The strength of his natural affection in the promptitude of this action, or the moderation with which he exercised his victory, and his disinterestedness

in declining any share of the fruits of it, for himself?

"And the king of Sodom said to Abram, give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hands unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet; and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say: I have made Abram rich."

That integrity is incorruptible, which considers not life and happiness as consisting in the abundance of the things which a man possesseth; which prizes an honest, though humble independence, above the honors which princes have to bestow. In true dignity of mind, and in generosity of sentiment, Abram is superior to most. We see kings receiving obligations from him, who shows himself above receiving an obligation from any one.

Abram, with so small a band as 318 persons of his own household, and a few friends, pursued, surprised, and discomfited, four confederate kings, with their victorious army, and recovered Lot, his brother's son. Returning from this bold, but successful enterprise, he is met by a prince of a very different character from those whom he had

conquered. They were the sons of violence, sons of blood; his name was Melchizedek, and Melchisalem, king of righteousness, king of peace.

These epithets and titles, were, no doubt, descriptive of the character of this great and good man. He might be designed by Providence to be a memorial to all princes, of what they ought to be; lovers, preservers, and promoters of justice; maintainers, and conservators of peace.

What other of the kings of the earth is to be compared with Melchizedek? Is he not raised up of Providence, to reproach and condemn the potentates of this world; the rule of whose conduct, too often, is not righteousness and law, but humour and caprice; and the end of it is not to bless mankind, but to gratify some passion of their own; who, instead of preserving the nations in peace, and themselves the sons of peace, have, with little intermission, from the commencement of regal power to this unhappy day, involved the human race in wretchedness, violence, and blood? To which of the earthly thrones shall we look for the union of the sanctity of the priesthood with temporal dominion? But there is a Prince, between whom and this king of Salem, the resemblance is so striking, that he who runs may read. When Melchizedek has blessed Abram; he is out of our sight, and is no more to be found. He burst

upon us like the sun from behind a cloud; he disappears again as quickly, and is to be discerned only in that track of glory which he has left behind him. Blessed type of him who led out his disciples as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them! And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

The analogy btween Melchizedek and the Messiah is so obvious, that we have only to bring Moses and Paul together, in order to discover its exactness. Their portraits are drawn, as it were at full length, by the masterly hands of a prophet and an apostle, and placed side by side for our inspection.

Scripture is singularly expressive both in what it speaks of Melchizedek, and in what it conceals; and, in both these respects, we may in some measure understand the meaning of what David saith, in spirit, of the Messiah: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

To whom can the name of king of righteousness and king of peace, be with more strict propriety applied, than to Him, whom God hath annointed over his holy hill of Zion; who reigns in justice and in love? "His name shall be called the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." His titles

arise out of the essence of his nature; the display of them is the object of his mission, the consummation of his plan: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Acquaintance with God through his Son produces inward tranquillity. The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever.

The circumstances relating to Melchizedek which are concealed, no less than those which are revealed to us, lead directly to similar circumstances, in the person and character of our Lord. Without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; no predecessor nor successor; no limited time of service, but a dignity permanent, inherent, and immutable.

Such was the type; what is the antitype? Who shall declare his generation? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abram was, I am. A great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, who, by one offering, hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; and, having washed us from our sins, in his own blood, would make us kings and priests unto God.

Hunter's Sacred Biography.

CHAPTER XI.

ABRAM, HAGAR, ISHMAEL.

AFTER the splendid events which have been recited, Abram retired again to the quietness and privacy of domestic life; confiding, no doubt, in Divine protection, and patiently waiting the accomplishment of the promises. Then the Lord came unto him in a vision, saying: "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." This renewed declaration of divine favour, drew from Abram a dutiful, but pathetic expostulation on the condition of his family affairs. He was grown rich, but his great possesions are ready to descend to a stranger, the steward of his household.

And behold the word of the Lord came to him saying: "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." We may conclude it was before daylight in the morning, that He brought him forth

abroad, and said: "look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them;" and he said unto him: "so shall thy seed be."

Abram's doubts are now entirely removed; he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness. The patriarch being thus answered, and encouraged, entreats some present token of the certainty of the promises made to him: "And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, take me a heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not."

"And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo! a horror of great darkness fell upon him; and he said unto Abram, know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them 400 years. And also that nation whom they serve will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold!

a smoking furnace, and a burning lamb, that passed between those pieces. In that same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

This is the first sacrifice we read of which appears to have been divinely instituted; and it is remarkable, that it includes the different kinds of victims which were, afterwards, directed to be offered under the law.

The making of covenants became customary in succeeding ages; and controversies and quarrels of every sort, issued at length in a covenant between the contending parties.

The word which is translated, "to make a covenant," in all the three learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; that is according to the uniform application of it in the Old Testament, and the constant phraseology of the most approved Greek and Roman Authors, signifies, to cut, to separate by cutting asunder.

We see Moses, the prince of sacred writers, describing a religious sacrifice performed more than nineteen hundred years before Christ; which Homer, the prince of heathen poets, so exactly describes as the practice of his country, more than a thousand years afterwards; and which Titus

Livius, the Roman Historian, relates as in use among his countrymen, in the time of Tullius Hostilius, the third king of Rome, before Christ about six hundred and sixty-eight years.

We learn from thence, that in excuting solemn covenants, the contracting parties, having passed between the divided limbs of sacrifice, and expressed their full assent to the stipulated terms of the covenant in solemn words, which were pronounced with an audible voice, imprecated upon themselves a bitter curse, if they should violate it: As I strik down this heifer, or ram, so may God strike me with death, if I transgress my word or oath. As the limbs of this animal are divided asunder, so may my body be torn to pieces, if I prove perfidious.

The covenant was ratified with Abram, in the most solemn manner. Under the sanction of an awful manifestation, a son is promised, the future father of a numerous offspring; and an inheritance allotted that chosen seed, by Him who has all things in heaven and in earth at his disposal.

Abram had now dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan; and, notwithstanding his advanced period in life, we do not find that he discovered any impatience for the fulfilment of the pro-

mise. It was now put beyond a doubt that Abram should become a father; but it had not yet been explicitly declared that Sarai should become a mother.

We may therefore suppose, that her feelings as a wife, gave way to her concern about her husband's glory and happiness, when she devised an intemperate expedient for arriving at the accomplishment of the promise: "And Sarai took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife."

Projects formed and executed in haste are generally repented of at leisure; when we fly in the face either of nature or religion, we shall infallibly find both the one, and the other, too powerful for us. Hagar becomes vain and insolent; Sarai is thoroughly mortified. Into what disorder has one ill advised measure thrown a happy and well regulated family. Abram's ill judged compliance with the precipitate advice of his wife, embroils him in contention with herself; constrains him to connive at her cruel treatment of an unhappy woman, and renders the prospect of the promised seed a heavy affliction, instead of a blessing. Sarai is betrayed by the eagerness of her spirit, first into an absurdity; then into undutifulness, in imputing blame to her

husband; then into barbarity to her slave, who was entirely at her mercy; who had been brought into a condition which claimed compassion and mercy, and brought into it by herself too.

Hagar was an object of commiseration, throughout, in having been elevated to a transient gleam of hope, exulting in the prosperity of a moment, hurried instantly back by all the severities which jealousy can inflict; and driven from visionary prospects of bliss, into scenes of real distress; ready to perish, with her unborn innocent, in the wilderness, by a famine, or the jaws of some ravenous beast; for when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Mark how seasonably and suitably, all this disorder is remedied by Divine interposition. When we have wearied ourselves with our own devices, and snared ourselves in the works of our own hands, Providence takes up the case, and subdues it to his own wise and gracious purpose, and turns evil into good. Hagar had fled from the face of her mistress, but the interest which Abram had in her, gives her an interest in the peculiar care and protection of the Almighty. And now, for the first time, we read of an angel appearing; and it was to reprove,

exhort, and encourage a helpless and afflicted woman; and he said unto her: "Thou shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction; and he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." "And she called the name of the Lord that spake to her: "*Thou God seest me.*"

The history informs us of Hagar's flight, but leaves us to draw our own conclusion respecting her return. Indeed we may now suppose all parties brought a little to themselves. The solitude and danger of the wilderness, and the appearance of the angel, awful, though in mercy, enjoining her to return to her mistress, we may suppose, had disposed Hagar to submit herself to Sarai. The sudden disappearing of her maid, the just apprehension of the evil which might befal a desperate woman in her delicate situation, and reflection on her own cruel and unjust behaviour, might have mollified the heart of Sarai, and disposed her to receive the returning fugitive; if not with external complacency, with secret and silent satisfaction. And Abram would doubtless rejoice in the restoration of the peace of his house; in this fresh demonstration

of divine tenderness towards his family; in the further enlargement of the promised blessing; and in prospect of the final and full accomplishment of all that the Lord had spoken.

To preserve for ever the memory of the Divine interposition, the pious father puts upon his son the name given to the child, by the angel, in the wilderness, viz. Ishmael; which signifies: *God shall hear;* because he heard and pitied the affliction of his mother.

But he was to be a wild man, whose hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him; whereas in the seed which the Most High had promised to raise up to Abram, all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Abram is therefore apparently as far as ever from his favourite object; and as a further trial of his faith, thirteen years more are permitted to elapse, and yet no symptom of the expected mercy appears. But at that period, while the improbability, in the course of nature, was daily increasing, Abram is again visited with the vision of the Almighty.

The appointed time is at length come for the performance of the promise. The very first words which proceed from His lips remove every difficulty, though natural obsta-

cles might seem increased: "I am the Almighty God." As much as to say, fear no failure of the covenant on my part; for what truth hath spoken, that shall Omnipotence bring to pass; and see there be no unfaithfulness on thine: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."

The former declarations respecting a numerous offspring are renewed; and an alteration is made in the patriarch's name, importing his relation to a multitude of princes and nations, which should spring from him; but the trials of Abraham's faith and obedience are not yet over.

It is declared that Sarai whose name too was changed, as a witness and token of the events, should bear a son; and that the next year should evince the truth and faithfulness of God. Abraham, in rapture, fell on his face and laughed. The memory of his faith on this occasion, was perpetuated to future generations by the name of his son Isaac. *He shall laugh;* expressive of the emotions which his pious father felt, when the Divine will was revealed to him. Abraham laughed in faith, and was rewarded by the approbation of his own conscience. Sarah laughed in incredulity, and was reproved for her unbelief.

One day, while Abraham was enjoying the coolness of the shade, at his tent door, in the heat of the day, three men, under the appearance

of travellers, presented themselves to his view. The scene which follows, is a beautiful picture of ancient manners; and coincides with the custom of other nations of remote antiquity, as transmitted to us by their historians and poets; particularly Homer, that careful observer, and masterly delineator of nature, and of human life.

Abraham immediately starts from his seat at the sight of strangers, and runs to meet them; and with that glow of affection which is natural to a good man who had himself known the heart of a stranger, he tenders them every accommodation and refreshment, which his simple habitation could afford.

Sweetness of temper, easiness of behaviour and kindness of disposition, are peculiarly engaging in old people; because these qualities do not so frequently adorn life's decline.

The invitation, hospitably given, is cheerfully accepted. True kindness, which is true politeness, attends to the little wishes and wants of those we entertain.

Water to wash the feet of a weary traveller, in a sultry climate, must have been a great refreshment; though not so necessary as a morsel of bread to comfort the heart. What a delightful simplicity runs through the whole story! The fare, cakes of fine meal, baked upon the hearth

by Sarah herself; a calf from the herd, of Abraham's own choosing; butter and milk, the produce of their own pasture. Their canopy, the spreading branches of a tree; their attendant, the man who in former days had put kings and armies to their flight.

Contrast this with the madness of a modern fashionable entertainment; the profusion of far fetched luxury; the emulation of wealth and pride; the ingenuity employed in contriving and administering incentives to excess; the gibberish of compliment; the restraints of ceremony; the tinsel of false wit; the noise of mirth, without joy; to the expulsion of truth and nature. A costly and painful collection, where nothing is wanting but the things which constitute a feast; plenty of wholesome fare, unaffected friendship, moderation, good humour, and good sense.

Sarah, according to the manner of the times, was invisible, confiding herself to her own separate tent. The angel now inquires concerning her, in order to introduce a conversation respecting the object of his mission; and directly subjoins the promise, that within the course of a year from that day, Abraham should have a son by her.

The business of this important visit being settled, the strangers rise to depart, and look as if they would go towards Sodom.

Abraham follows up his hospitality with kindness and attention to the last; he went with them to bring them on their way. Two of them it seems disappeared, and Abraham is left alone with the third. "And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation; and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

The subsequent part of the character here given of him, deserves the attention of every father, and every master: "For I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." The secret divulged was, God's determination, speedily and signally, to destroy the neighbouring cities, whose profligacy was arrived at such a height as suffered not justice to rest.

Abraham, justly alarmed at the intimation, with the sympathy and tenderness natural to a good mind, takes upon him to intercede on behalf of his unhappy neighbours, now on the brink of ruin. The whole intercession is affecting in a high degree, and needs no comment to illustrate its force and beauty. Awfully abandoned must

have been the state of those cities, where ten righteous persons could not be found. That beautiful plain which had allured the eyes of Lot, was, in on eeventful day, converted into a vast smoking furnace; cities and their inhabitants swallowed up in a deluge of fire.

Abraham had lived sixteen years in the plains of Mamre; but now the neighbourhood might have become unpleasant by the change which had passed upon it, and which presented tremendous monuments of Divine wrath; he removes to the south-west corner of Canaan, the country of the Philistines; which was afterwards assigned by lot to the tribe of Judah.

Here, at the set time, the expected promise was fulfilled, and Sarah had a son; the heir of great possessions; the father and founder of a mighty nation; the progenitor, according to the flesh, of the Saviour of the world; given by promise, and raised up by a miracle. Abraham, according to the custom of the times, made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned, when probably he was recognized as his heir. This might excite the envy and the displeasure of Ishmael, and produce that insolent and contemptuous behaviour, which our translation renders by the word, mocking; and by which Sa-

rah was so incensed[a], that she insisted on the immediate banishment of Hagar and her son. Probably she might entertain some fear of him who was so much advanced in age, and stature, and strength, above Isaac; and of so wild and untoward a disposition.

Abraham's peace is broken, by the necessity he is under of driving from his own house, his own child, and the unhappy mother. That the patriarch, for the sake of peace at home, should consent to part with the bond woman, and her son, is very conceivable; but that they should be turned adrift into the wide world, without protection, without attendant, without provision, except as much bread and water, as the wretched mother could carry upon her shoulders; these are circumstances, which, upon the usual principles of human conduct, appear strange and unaccountable.

And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs; and she went and sat her down a good way off, for she said, let me not see the death of the child; and she sat over against him, and lifted up her

[a] It should be remembered that female slaves, were the private patrimony and possession of the wife, their mistress; she had a right, according to the usuage of those times, to dispose of them as she pleased; the husband having no authority in that case.

voice and wept. "And God heard the voice of the lad. And an angel called to Hagar out of heaven. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand, for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

We may well suppose that the expulsion of Ishmael from his father's house, and the way of life it forced him into, would greatly increase his natural ferocity of temper; and contribute to form and fix that character given of him by the angel, before he was born." He shall be a wild man, &c.

Hunter's Sacred Biography.

CHAPTER XII.

PROPHECIES RESPECTING ISHMAEL.

WHEN Isaac was promised to Abraham, God still reserved a blessing for Ishmael. *Gen.* xvii. 20: "Behold I have blessed him, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall be the father of twelve princes; and I will make him a great nation." And afterwards, when Hagar and Ishmael were sent into the wilderness: "God said unto Abraham: And also of the son of the bond woman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." We shall now see by the course of events, how exactly these particulars have been fulfilled. Ishmael married an Egyptian woman, as his mother also was an Egyptian; and, in a few years, his family was so increased, that in the 37th chapter of Genesis, we read of Ishmaelites trading into Egypt.

Afterward his seed was multiplied exceedingly in the Hagarenes; who probably were so denominated from his mother Hagar; and in the Nabatheans, who had their name from his son

Nebaioth; and in the Itureans, who were so called from his son Jetur, or Itur; and in the Arabs, especially the Scenites, and the Saracens, who over-ran a great part of the world. His descendants the Arabs are a very numerous people unto this day.

"*He shall be the father of twelve princes.*" This was punctually fulfilled; and Moses has given us the names of them, *Gen.* xxv. 16, Adding: "These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and their castles, twelve princes according to their nations."

"*And I will make him a great nation.*" This is repeated twice or thrice: and it was accomplished as soon as, in the regular course of nature, it could be fulfilled. His seed, in process of time, grew up into a great nation, and such they continued for several ages; and such they remain to this day.

They might indeed emphatically be styled "a great nation," when the Saracens had made those rapid and extensive conquests, and laid the foundations of one of the largest empires that ever were in the world.

"*And he will be a wild man.*" In the original, it is, a wild ass man. The nature of the creature to which Ishmael is so particularly compared, cannot be described better than in the book

of Job, xxxix. 5: "Who hath sent out the wild ass free, or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass; whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings? He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing." Ishmael, therefore, and his posterity were to be wild, fierce, savage, ranging in the deserts, and not easily softened and tamed to society; and whoever hath read or known any thing of this people, knoweth this to be their true and genuine character.

And it is said of Ishmael, *Gen.* xxi. 20. "that he dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer;" and the same is no less true of his descendants than of himself.

"*He dwelt in the wilderness;* and his sons still inhabit the same wilderness; and many of them neither sow nor plant, according to the best accounts both ancient and modern.

"*And he became an archer.*" And such were the Itureans, whose bows, and arrows, are famous in all[x] authors; such were the mighty men of Kedar, in Isaiah's time; *Isaiah* xxi. 17; and

[x] Lucan. Lib. vii. page 230.

such the Arabs have been from the beginning, and are at this day. It was late before they admitted the use of fire arms among them; and many of them still continue skilful archers.

"His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."

The one is the natural, and almost necessary consequence of the other. Ishmael lived by prey and rapine, in the wilderness; and his posterity have all along infested Arabia, and the neighbouring countries, with their robberies and incursions. They live in a state of continual war with the rest of the world, and are both robbers by land, and pirates by sea.

As they have been such enemies to mankind, it is no wonder that mankind have been enemies to them again; and that several attempts have been made to extirpate them. Even now, as well as formerly, travellers are forced to go with arms, and in caravans, or in large companies; and to march, and keep watch and guard, like a little army, to defend themselves from the assaults of those freebooters; who run about in troops, and rob and plunder all whom they can by any means subdue.

These robberies they also justify,[x] by alleging the hard usage of their father Ishmael; who

[x] Sales, Prelim. Discourse to the Koran, Sect. 1. page 30.

being turned out of doors by his father Abraham, had the open plains and countries given him by God for his patrimony, with permission to take whatever he could find there. On this account they think they may, with a safe conscience, indemnify themselves as well as they can; not only on the posterity of Isaac, but also on every body else; always supposing a sort of kindred between themselves and those they plunder. And in relating their adventures of this kind, they think it sufficient to change the expression, and instead of saying: I robbed a man, of such, or such a thing; to say: I gained it.

"*And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.*" Shall tabernacle; for many of the Arabs dwell in tents, and therefore are called Scenites. This is very extraordinary, that his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and yet that he should be able to dwell in the presence of his brethren.

But extraordinary as it was, this hath also been fulfilled both in the person of Ishmael and in his posterity. As for Ishmael himself, the same historian afterwards relates, *Gen.* xxv. 17, 18, that the years of the life of Ishmael were a a hundred, thirty, and seven years, "and he died in the presence of his brethren." As for his posterity, they dwelt in the presence of all

their brethren, Abraham's sons by Keturah; the Moabites and Ammonites, descendants of Lot; the Israelites, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the Edomites, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau. And they still subsist a distinct people, and inhabit the country of their progenitors, notwithstanding the perpetual enmity between them and the rest of mankind.

It may be said that the country was not worth conquering, and that its barrenness was its preservation. But this is a mistake; for by all accounts, though the greater part of it is sandy, and barren deserts; yet here and there are interspersed beautiful spots, and fruitful vallies. One part of the country was known and distinguished by Arabia the happy. But if the country were ever so bad, one would think it should be for the interest of the neighbouring powers and states, at any hazard, to root out such a pestilent race of robbers; and actually it hath several times been attempted, but never accomplished. They, from first to last, maintained their independency; and, notwithstanding the most powerful efforts for their destruction, still "dwell in the presence of all their brethren," and in the presence of all their enemies.

We find that in the time of Moses, they were grown up into twelve princes, according to their

nations, *Gen.* xxv. 16: "And they dwelt from Havilah, unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest towards Assyria;" but yet we do not find that they were ever subject to either of their powerful neighbours, the Egyptians, or Assyrians. The conquests of Sesostris, the great king of Egypt, are much magnified, by Diodorus Siculus; and probably he might subdue some of the western provinces of Arabia, bordering upon Egypt; but he was obliged, as Diodorus informs us, to draw a line from Heliopolis to Pelusium; to secure Egypt from the incursions of the Arabs; they were therefore not subject, but enemies to the Egyptians; as they were likewise to the Assyrians; for they assisted[x] Belesis and Arbaces, in overturning that empire; assisted them, not as fellow rebels, but as an independent state, with their auxiliary forces.

The next great conquerors of the east, were Cyrus and the Persians; but neither he, nor any of his successors, ever reduced the whole body of the Arabs to subjection: they might conquer some of the exterior, but never reached the interior, parts of the country. And Herodotus the historian, who lived nearest to these times, saith expressly, that the Arabs were never reduced

[x] Diod. Sic. Lib. II. page 39.

by the Persians, to the condition of subjects; but were considered by them as friends; and opened to them a passage into Egypt, which, without the assistance and permission of the Arabs, would have been utterly impracticable. And in another place, he says, that while Phænicia, Palestine, Syria, and the neighbouring countries were taxed, the Arabian territories continued free from paying tribute. They were then regarded as friends, but afterwards they assisted with their forces, Amyrtaus, King of Egypt, against Darius Nothus; and Euagorus, king of Cyprus, against Artaxerxes Mnemon; so that they acted as friends, or enemies, to the Persians, just as they thought proper; and as it suited their humour, or their interest.

Alexander the Great, then overturned the Persian empire, and conquered Asia. The neighbouring princes sent their ambassadors to make their submission. The Arabs[x] alone disdained to acknowledge the conqueror, and scorned to send any embassy, or to take any notice of him. This slight provoked him to such a degree, that he meditated an expedition against them; and the great preparations which he made for it, showed that he thought them a very formidable

[x] Strabo, Lib. 16, page 32.

enemy: but death intervened, and put an end to all that his ambition or resentment had formed against them.

Thus they escaped the fury of his arms; and they were never subdued by any of his successors. Diodorus asserts, that neither the Assyrians formerly, nor the kings of the Medes and Persians, nor yet of the Macedonians, were able to subdue them.

The Romans then invaded the east, and subdued the countries adjoining, but were never able to reduce Arabia into the form of a Roman province. The Arabs continued their incursions and depredations on Syria, and other Roman provinces, with equal licence and impunity.

Such was the state and condition of the Arabs, to the time of their prophet Mohammed, who laid the foundations of a mighty empire; and then, for several centuries, they were better known by the name of the Saraceni, or Saracens; the Arraceni of Pliny,[x] and the Hagarenes, of holy scripture. Their conquests indeed were amazingly rapid; they can be compared to nothing more properly than to a sudden flood, or inundation. In a few years, the Saracens overran more countries, and subdued more people, than the

x Pliny Hot. Hist. Lib. 6, page 32.

Romans did in several centuries. They were then not only free, and independent of the rest of the world, but were themselves masters of the most considerable part of the earth; and so they continued[x] for about three centuries. After their empire was dissolved, and they were reduced to within the limits of their native country, they still maintained their liberty against the Tartars, Mamelucs, Turks, and all foreign enemies whatever.

The Turks have now, for several centuries, been lords of the adjacent countries; but they have been so little able to restrain the depredations of the Arabs, that they have been obliged to pay them a sort of tribute for the safe passage, and security of the Pilgrims, who usually go in great companies to Mecca. Who can fairly consider, and lay all these particulars together, and not perceive the hand of God in the whole affair, from the beginning to the end?

The sacred historian says, these prophecies concerning Ishmael, were delivered partly by the angel of the Lord, and partly by God himself. And who but God, or one raised up and commissioned by Him, could describe so particularly the genius, and manners, not only of a sin-

[x] See Sir Isaac Newton on the Apocalypse, Cap. 3, 304.

gle person, before he was born; but of a whole people from the first founder of the race, to the present time? It was not to be foreseen by human sagacity, that a man's whole posterity should so nearly resemble him, and retain the same inclinations, the same habits, and the same customs, throughout all ages. The waters of the purest spring or fountain are soon changed, or polluted in their course; and the further they flow, the more they are incorporated, and lost in other waters.

How have the modern Italians degenerated, from the courage and virtues of the old Romans! How are the French and English, polished and refined from the barbarism of the ancient Gauls and Britons! Men and manners change with times; but, in all changes and revolutions, there is little or no material alteration in the Arabs. And yet it cannot be said of them, as of some barbarous nations, that they have had no commerce or intercourse with the rest of mankind; for, by their conquests, they overran a great part of the earth, and, for some centuries, were masters of most of the learning that was in the world: but they remained, and they still remain, the same fierce, savage, intractable people; like their great ancestor in every thing, and different from most of the world besides.

Ishmael lived in tents, in the wilderness, shifting from place to place; and so do those of his descendants, called the Scenites; and those called Bedowins, at this day. He was an archer in the wilderness, so are they. He was to be the father of twelve princes, or heads of tribes; and they live in clans, or tribes, at this day. He was a wild man, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; and they live in the same state of war, their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them.

This is wonderful, that the same people should retain the same disposition, for so many ages; but it is still more wonderful, that with these dispositions, and this enmity to the whole world, they should still subsist, in spite of the world, an independent, and free people.

Alexander was preparing an expedition against them, when an inflammatory fever cut him off, in the flower of his age.

Pompey, who triumphed over three parts of the world, was, in the course of his conquests, called from Arabia by urgent affairs. Ælius Gallus had penetrated far into the country, when, by a mortal disease, great numbers of his men were destroyed, which obliged him to return. The emperor Trajan besieged their capital city, but was defeated by thunder, and lightning, and

whirlwinds; and that as often as he renewed the assault.

Severus besieged the same city twice, and was twice repulsed from before it. And the historian Dion, a man of rank and character, though a heathen, plainly ascribes the defeat of these two emperors, to the interposition of a Divine Power.

He who knows the prophecies, may be assured of the reality of a Divine interposition; and indeed how, otherwise, could a single nation stand out against the enmity of the whole world, for near four thousand years! The great empires round them, have all, in turns, fallen to ruin; while they have continued the same from the beginning.

This, in the natural course of human affairs, was so highly improbable, if not altogether impossible, that as nothing but a Divine Prescience could have foreseen it, so nothing but a Divine Power could have accomplished it. These are the only people besides the Jews, who have subsisted as a distinct people from the beginning; and, in some respects, they very much resemble each other.

The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are descended from Abraham. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, marry amongst themselves, and in their

own tribes. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are singular in several of their customs, and are standing monuments to all ages, of the exactness of the Divine predictions, and of the veracity of scripture history. We may with more confidence believe the particulars related of Abraham and Ishmael, when we see them verified, at this day, in their posterity. This is proving, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and that his truth, as well as his mercy, endureth for ever.

Newton on the Prophecies.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABRAHAM.

MOST men, during the bustling period of human life, indulge ideas of retreat and tranquillity, as they draw near to the close. Abraham had arrived, through much tribulation, at that period when nature wishes for repose; all that a wise and good man could reasonably propose to himself, he had, through the blessing of Providence, now attained. Religion crowned his multiplied temporal comforts, and opened the celestial paradise to his view. Isaac, the joy of his joy, is grown up, and is become amiable; his eyes have seen the salvation of God, and he can depart in peace whenever the summons comes. But how vain is it to think of rest, till the scene be closed! All the trials which Abraham had hitherto endured, are merely superficial wounds, compared to the keen stroke of that two edged sword, which now pierced him, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.

To suffer banishment from his country and friends; to be chased by famine from the land of promise; to have the companion of his youth, his affectionate partner, repeatedly forced from him; to have his domestic peace disturbed, and his life embittered, by female jealousy and resentment; to be reduced to the necessity of expelling his elder son from his house, with the slender provision of a little bread and water: these, it must be allowed, exhibit a lot of severity and hardship; but they are lost in the severity of the greater woe yet behind. For it came to pass, after all these things, in addition to all foregoing evils, and apparently to the defeating of the great design of Omnipotence, that God tried Abraham in this manner: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

A person of humanity, like Abraham, might naturally be supposed to revolt from the idea of a human sacrifice, had the meanest slave of his household been demanded, and had the choice of a victim been left to himself. What then must have been the emotions of his mind, from the moment its darling object was required! But Abraham hesitates not, argues not. He who before

staggered not at the promise, staggers not now at the precept, through unbelief. As a proof of his being in earnest, he rises early, and having saddled his ass ; for it was in this simple style, that these great men of the east used to travel ; having summoned two of his young men to attend and assist in the preparation ; having called Isaac, and cleft the wood for a burnt offering, they proceed together from Beersheba to the land of Moriah. Being arrived at the foot of the mountain which was pointed out, the servants are left behind, and Abraham, armed with the fire and the knife, ascends, attended by Isaac, bearing the wood destined to consume the victim. And now had his faith been capable of failing; could his purpose have changed, the question which Isaac, in the simplicity of his heart, proposed, must have triumphed over his resolution : "And Isaac said, Behold the fire and the wood ! but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

The heart that feels not this is lost to sensibility. Every endeavour to illustrate or enforce it, would be as idle as an attempt to perfume the rose ; to paint the tulip into richer tints ; or to burnish the sun into a brighter lustre.

The mighty secret which had hitherto laboured in the anxious paternal breast, must now be disclosed; the lamb for the burnt offering must be produced. It is not the sacrifice of a bullock, or a sheep, which is unable to make resistance; nor of a child unconscious of its situation.

Josephus makes Isaac at this time to be twenty-five years of age, and represents him, with much appearance of truth, as a young man of singular accomplishments, both of body and of mind; who might by argument, by entreaty, by speed or by force, have delivered himself; but we find he submits to be bound, and to be laid a victim upon the wood. And now, behold a sight from which nature shrinks back, and stands confounded! A father lifting up his hand, armed with a deadly weapon, to slay his own son! The voice of God is again heard, and he receives his Isaac a second time from the Hand that gave him at first.

How welcome is the language! "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Abraham prophesied without being conscious of it, when he said: "My son, God will provide himself a

lamb for a burnt offering." For lo! "behind him, a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

We know but in part, and we prophecy in part; but God sees the end from the beginning. "He is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He."

With what different feelings does the patriarch descend from the mountain! His Isaac lives, and yet his sacrifice is offered. Who ever sacrificed to God and was a loser? Who ever hardened himself against God, and prospered? Who cannot but perceive, through the whole of this wonderful history, the mystery of redemption shadowed forth? Is the Divine conduct, in this trial of Abraham, dark and inexplicable to human reason? Angels desire to look into the plan of gospel salvation, and are unable to comprehend it.

Was Abraham ready, at God's command, to offer up his only son for a burnt offering? God so loved the world that he gave his only begotton son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God had

pity on an earthly, afflicted parent, and a devoted child, and sent his angel to deliver him; but God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all. Isaac was ready to be slain, but Jesus was actually put to death. Instead of the sacrifice of Isaac, behold a type of the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!

To view the history of Abraham in detached parts, is to involve ourselves in difficulty and distress; to read patiently to the end, is to arrive at light, peace, and joy. Presumptuous men will take upon them to judge of a plan which is not yet executed, and will apply to the narrow and erroneous scale of their own reason and understanding, the infinite and eternal designs of the only wise God.

It does not appear but that upwards of thirty years of the latter part of Sarah's life, were tranquil and calm; cheered by the unabated affection of her husband, and blessed with the progress and accomplishments of her son, the favourite of God and man.

"And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old, and she died in Kirjatharba, the same is Hebron, in the land of Canaan. And Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite, the cave of Macpelah, for four hundred she-

kels[x] of silver, current money with the merchant; and therein he buried Sarah his wife."

It is worthy of observation, that this is the first money transaction we read of in the world. Till then, and long after, both among the posterity of Abraham, and other nations, wealth was estimated by the number and quality of cattle. And cattle were the principal instruments of commerce. Thus we read in many places of Homer, of a coat of mail worth a hundred oxen; a chaldron worth twenty sheep; a cup, or goblet, worth twelve lambs, and the like. The words which signified exchange of commodities, are mostly derived from the names of certain animals, by means of which that exchange was originally carried on.

Thus the word which signifies to truck, or commute one kind of goods for another, is derived from that which signifies a *lamb;* the verb which is translated to *sell*, comes from the noun which signifies a *colt*, or young horse. The Greek word which in our language is to *buy*, comes from that which signifies an *ass*.

x Dr. Prideaux makes the shekel to be equal to three shillings English money.

By the death of Sarah, the care and anxiety about the dear object of their common affection, becomes much increased to the surviving parent. Isaac was arrived at an age when it was fit that the heir of the promise, should be established in a family of his own. Abraham, with the solicitude of a good father, is rather desirous of matching his son piously, than nobly, or to great wealth.

Abraham judges it improper to marry his son into a Hittite family, because they had deviated from the worship of the true God. Isaac, it would appear, devoted to retirement and contemplation, little attached himself to the concerns of this life.

The management of his affairs, and his settlement in the world, he leaves to the wisdom of his father, and the fidelity of an ancient domestic.

As far as Abraham is concerned in it, we behold him acknowledging God in all his ways, making this concern of life, a religious service; and we see God, in return, directing every step in his life to a happy issue. Having seen his beloved son settled entirely to his satisfaction, he enters again himself into the honourable state of marriage; and is blessed in it by a progeny of

six sons, and ten grand children, born in his life time.

In order to prevent strife after his death, as far as human sagacity and foresight could do it; and knowing that property is a source of great contention among men, he settles his worldly affairs; bequeathing the great bulk of his property to Isaac, the son of his first wife; and herein fulfilling the condition of the covenant under which Rebekah was induced to become Isaac's wife. He makes suitable provision for the younger branches of his family, and sends them into a distant part of the country while he yet lived, that Isaac might not be exposed to trouble from his brothers, after his decease.

The final period at length overtakes Abraham, and he comes to the grave as a shock of corn cometh in its season; at the age of one hundred threescore and fifteen, and in the year of the world, two thousand one hundred and eighty three. A life shorter by far than any we have yet traced, but much fuller of incidents and events. It appears that some intercourse, between Ishmael and his father's family, had been kept up; for we find him apprised of Abraham's death, and attending the interment. This was one hundred and fifteen years before the descent

into Egypt. At Abraham's decease, Isaac was seventy-five years old, Esau and Jacob fifteen, Ishmael eighty-nine, and Eber, otherwise Heber, from whom the name of Hebrew comes, four hundred and sixty.

"By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country; dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; and when he gave up the ghost, was buried in the cave of Macpelah, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael."

In this account of Abraham, we have beheld the father of all them that believe, raised up by Divine Providence with an important view, and to carry on a grand design.

In the declaration made to him, we behold the plan of redemption assuming a clearer and more distinct form. He who was promised to Adam immediately after the fall, under the more obscure description of "the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head," was now announced to the world as the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. And henceforward we have prediction upon prediction; promise upon promise; event upon event; leading forward, rising above, improving, enlarging one upon another, like the gradual light of the ascending sun, from the ear-

ly dawn unto the perfect day. In the prosecution of this design, we shall observe types, shadows, ceremonies, sacrifices, disappearing by little and little; patriarchs, priests, prophets, law-givers, and kings, retiring one after another, and giving place to the Lord, our Judge, our Law-giver, our King, our Saviour.

Hunter's Sacred Biography.

CHAPTER XIV.

ISAAC.

IN the history which we have traced, the life of the patriarch Abraham, has appeared to be of so much importance, and has so abounded in incident, that we have appropriated three chapters, to delineate some of the most striking traits in his character; but the limits of our design, will not admit of equal attention to the conduct of the different branches of his family. We have already glanced at the journey of Abraham's servant to the city of Nahor, to take a wife for Isaac. The particulars which that transaction presents, are a beautiful and interesting picture, of the simplicity of ancient manners and customs.

"And what is of more consequence, we see all parties piously regarding Divine direction in a matter of so much importance. The father giving full proof of his solicitude for the happiness of his only son, by seeking to match him with virtue and religion; rather than with rank, and affluence, to the endangering of his moral and religious principles.

This pious motive appears to have been remarkably blessed, when Eliezer came to the well of the city of Nahor; for he had scarcely finished his address to the God of Abraham, his master, when Providence, who works unseen, unknown, unobserved by us, brought the subject of his prayer already to his view; and in what employment was the intended bride of Isaac found? Is she indolently reclining under a canopy of state, or taking the evening air attended by a splendid retinue of servants? No, behold her, beautiful, young, and high born, bearing a pitcher on her shoulder to the well, to draw water for the family! And learn, that the humble, yet useful employments of domestic life, however they may appear in the view of unfeeling wealth, or giddy dissipation, are a virtuous woman's most honourable occupation; because most conducive to the essential interests and real comforts of mankind.

Isaac, at the age of threescore, becomes the father of two sons, twenty years after his marriage with Rebekah.

The strife which had begun before they were born, becomes visible at the birth, and their contention not only continued during the greater part of their lives, but was transmitted to their posterity. As Isaac's children grow up, he

is under the necessity of arising and exerting himself; for the blessing of Providence is to be asked, and to be expected only when men are found in the way of their duty, and employing lawful and approved means of prospering. We accordingly find him, with the prudent sagacity of a good husband, father, and master, directing the removal of his family from place to place, as occasion frequently required; forming alliances with his powerful neighbours for the purpose of security, and presiding in the affairs of religion, his favourite employment.

The distresses which embittered the remainder of his life, were chiefly internal and domestic; and had their source in his own infirmity, a fond partiality for his eldest son; the mischief of which was increased and kept alive, by a partiality equally decided, which Rebekah entertained in favour of Jacob.

The evil of a man's lot may be frequently traced to some weakness which he has indulged; and of all the infirmities to which our nature is subject, none is more unreasonable, unwise, or unjust, than that of making a difference between one child and another. The trifling circumstances of personal likeness, of beauty and deformity, and the like, over which parents had little power, and the children none

at all; and which, in themselves, have neither merit nor demerit; which are the objects neither of just praise nor of blame, have been known to establish distinctions in families, that have excited jealousies and discord, to the destruction of their peace, and acceleration of their ruin.

It was not long before the effect of parental partialities, involved the family of the patriarch in these disastrous consequences; for we find a competition for precedency, and the right of primogeniture, had whetted the spirits of the brothers against each other, from their earliest years. But while the family was torn with internal dissentions, Providence was pleased to visit them with a grievous calamity: "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham." This for a while repressed animosity; the struggle for precedency gives place to the weightier concern, Where shall we find bread? This dispensation was probably intended as a correction to all parties.

"And the Lord appeared unto Isaac, and said, Go not down into Egypt, dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, will I give all these countries;" "and in thy seed shall

all the nations of the earth be blessed." Isaac being thus warned, retired to Gerar, one of the cities of Palestine. He became very great in that land, had possession of flocks, and herds, and great store of servants; and the Philistines envied him; for all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham, the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth. This threatened the destruction of Isaac's flocks; for without water, the cattle upon a thousand hills are a perishing commodity. Isaac therefore digged again the wells. But of such value were springs of water in a country, the chief riches of which consisted in cattle, that no sooner had he met with them, than the herdsmen of Gerar were striving to gain possession of the wells. What was the conduct of Isaac on this occasion? Did he attempt by force to support his just rights? That he was able to have kept the possession we cannot doubt; for before this, Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, had said to him: "Go from us, for thou art mightier than we." But notwithstanding his power, we find him rather meekly receding, than violently contending for what was so valuable to him. We find him relinquishing the wells which he had digged, after testifying against the conduct of the herdsmen of Gerar, by calling the wells

Esek and Sitnah; names which denote the hatred, and contention of those persons.

Having been pursued by the jealousy and selfishness of his neighbours, he conquers by yielding; a victory the most certain, the most honourable, and the most satisfactory. He retires, until he could dig a well without molestation; then he breaks forth in this pious exclamation: "Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land;" and he called the name of the well Rehoboth.[k]

Having made so great a sacrifice for peace, he had confidence to go up to Beersheba; and after the insults and outrage, he received from the Philistines, he is consoled and distinguished, in a remarkable manner, by the assurance of Divine protection and favour; for the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said: "I am the God of Abraham, thy father; fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee."

Here let us inquire, did the mild, and peaceful temper of the patriarch, subject him to the imputation of pusillanimity, or expose him to the contempt of his powerful neighbours? On the contrary, we find Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, coming from Gerar, and with him Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phicol, the

chief captain of his army, to make suit to Isaac for his amity and friendship.

And when he asked them: "Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me? They said, we saw certainly that the Lord was with thee." Here are the declarations verified: "When a a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

This is a subject worthy the contemplation of statesmen, and rulers of kingdoms; for them to consider what sacrifices they have made to the cause of humanity; in what degree they have been actuated by the spirit of the gospel, in overcoming evil with good; how they have profited by that dispensation which was introduced to promote peace on earth, good will to men.

[k]Those scenes of human life which make the greatest figure in history, are far from being the most beneficial to mankind; neither were the persons whose names have been transmitted to us with renown, whose actions have dazzled posterity with their lustre, either the happiest in themselves, or the greatest blessings to the age in which they lived.

To make one man a hero, how many garments must have been rolled in blood! And what are the acclamations of a triumph, but the miserable echo of the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying!

Eighteen years after this, we find the domestic tranquillity of the patriarch's family again disturbed, and that by his favourite son; who, in the 40th year of his own life, which is the hundreth of his father's, introduced two idolatrous wives into the family. Here were two evils in one: the being unequally yoked with unbelievers, and carrying on a practice which has ever been, and ever will be, destructive to domestic peace.

The daughter of a Hittite, would naturally be disposed to interrupt the religious harmony which prevailed; and two wives at once, would as certainly be disposed to annoy each other, and to embroil the whole family in their quarrels. Isaac was well acquainted with the solicitude of his pious father on his own account, in the important engagement of marriage. We may easily conceive then how he felt at the accumulated irregularity of his own son Esau. Neglected and unconsulted in a matter of the highest consequence to his comfort, by that son whom he had cherished with the fondest affection, and on

whom he rested his fondest hopes; he saw that the holy descent was in danger of being marred, by an impure heathenish mixture, and that the minds of his grand-children, were likely to be perverted from the knowledge and worship of the God of their fathers. The undutiful conduct of Esau, was a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

Whether from vexation occasioned by this event, from accident, or from disease of the organs of sight, we find Isaac, in the 135th year of his age, in a state of total blindness; so that forty-three years of his pilgrimage were passed in a dark, uncomfortable state.

When he begins to be sensible of growing infirmities, he appears anxious to convey the double portion, the patriarchal benediction, according to the bent of his natural affection, to his eldest and beloved son.

He calls him with paternal tenderness, and proposes to him the mingled gratification of pursuing his own favourite amusement, of ministering to his fond father's pleasure, and of securing for himself the great object of his ambition and desire, the blessing, and all its valuable effects.

In this instance, the eye of his mind, seems to have been as dim as the bodily organ, in over-

looking the undutifulness which had pierced a father's heart, by Esau's unhallowed marriage with the Hittites.

He seems to discern in his darling those qualities only, in which misguided affection had dressed him. This manifests that a strong and lively principle of grace, may consist with much natural weakness. But Rebekah, equally attentive to the interest of her younger son, and overhearing the charge which Isaac gave to Esau, immediately determines at all hazards, to carry a favourite point; she projects to obtain by management, what she despaired of bringing about by the direct road of entreaty and persuasion. Unhappy it is for that family, the heads of which entertain opposite views, and pursue separate interests.

The apologists for Rebekah, charitably ascribe her conduct, on this occasion, to motives of religion. She is supposed to be actuated throughout by zeal for supporting the designs of Omnipotence: "The elder shall serve the younger." This might be her aim, but true religion does not incline any to do evil, that good may come of it. The deception which she practised upon the helplessness of her husband, was it becoming in the wife of his youth? Was it consistent with genuine piety to take the work of

Jehovah out of his hands, as if His wisdom needed the aid of human craft and invention? And could a mother, not only herself deviate into the crooked path of dissimulation and falsehood; but persuade and constrain her own son to violate sacred truth? This cannot come to good.

When Esau found that his brother, had supplanted him in the blessing, the tenderness of his expostulation is very remarkable: "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also. O! my father! and Esau lifted up his voice and wept." Esau was sensible, at this moment, of the value of the blessing which heretofore he had slighted. And now behold the spark of discord, which before had kindled between brethren, blown into a flame, which threatens destruction to the whole family! And dreadful to relate, Esau looks forward with desire to the death of his father, that he may prosecute revenge against his brother unto blood.

Hitherto we have seen Esau an object of compassion, but now we must view him with abhorrence; and we find the judgments of the Most High, prosecuting this murderous disposition in his posterity, to their utter ruin: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." Rebekah, now that a sword pierces through her

own soul, in the danger of losing both her children in one day, discerns, too late, how imprudently she has acted; and is glad to purchase the safety of her favourite at the price of his banishment.

The threatening words of the elder son, had reached the ears of his aged father; and he has the inexpressible mortification of learning, that he, whom he had cherished in his bosom, and to whom his fondness would have given every thing, was enjoying the prospect of his approaching death, because it would afford a safer opportunity of practising his meditated revenge. This was as the bitterness of death. And thus severely the unwise attachment of both parents, punished itself in its effects.

To prevent the dreadful mischief which hung over his hoary head, all his prospects concerning Esau being now blighted, Isaac gladly consents to the dismission of Jacob; and all his hopes at length settle in him whom he loved less. For a father at 140 years to part with his heir, to send him away into a far country, might well appear like parting with him for ever. The fervour of his farewell benediction pathetically expresses his despair of meeting him again: "God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, that thou mayst be a multitude of people. And give thee

the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham." These are the last words of Isaac upon record; but his latter end was at a greater distance than he or Esau apprehended.

He survived this event forty years. He lived to be refreshed with the good tidings of the success of the blessing; to see the increase of Jacob's family, and even to embrace his grandchildren.

And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years; and he died, and was gathered to his people. Thus lived, and died, Isaac, the son of Abraham, a man of contemplation, piety, and peace; a man of few and slight infirmities, of many and eminent virtues.

To young men he may be held up as a pattern of filial tenderness and submission. Isaac possessed, in an eminent degree, that most amiable quality of ingenuous youth, dutiful respect to the memory of her that bare him. Fulfilling the first class of relative duties prepares for higher. The transition from an affectionate son, to a kind and indulgent husband, is natural and easy, which may furnish a plain but important rule to young persons, in forming the great choice for life. What reason is there to expect that one

who has violated the first law of nature, and of morality, will fall at once, without preparation, into the more complicated duties of the conjugal state. The master of a family may learn of the patriarch, domestic piety and devotion, conjugal felicity and persevering industry.

The selfish and contentious, are reproved by the example of his moderation; by his patience under unkindness and injustice; by his meek surrender of an undoubted right for the sake of peace. Let the affluent learn to adorn rank by humility and condescension, and the afflicted to endure distress with fortitude and resignation.

Let his infirmities be remembered only as an admonition to ourselves; and let us be followers together of him, and of all them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.[k]

CHAPTER XV.

JACOB.

WE have seen that superiority and pre-eminence, were conferred upon Jacob before he was born; and we shall see that the struggle which early began between the two brothers, did not soon subside.

"With more than ordinary reasons for loving each other, the ill judged partialities of parental affection, and the lust of precedency and of power, inflame them to uncommon rancour and animosity.

It cannot be affirmed, that the conduct of Jacob was either pure or praise-worthy, in taking advantage of his brother's hunger to obtain the birthright, or of his father's blindness, in order to procure to himself the paternal benediction. Providence neither appoints nor approves of crooked and indirect paths to the ends He proposes. Weak and erring men, may not be displeased to have, at times, part of their work taken off their hands; but if we presume to take the work of God upon ourselves, it is both with sin and with danger:

"His counsel indeed shall stand, but the offender shall pay the price of his rashness."

If we inquire what could make Rebekah and her favourite son, so anxious to obtain for him the pre-eminence, it may be answered, First, that the gift of prophecy was known to be conferred upon the patriarch Isaac; and, in consequence, the parental benediction was considered to have the force of a prediction. Secondly, superiority and power over the rest of the family, in patriarchal times, were affixed to priority of birth.—Thirdly, a double portion of the paternal inheritance appertained to the first born.—Fourthly, the honour of priesthood resided then, and for many years after, in the first born.—And finally, the promise of the Messiah, "the first born among many brethren," was entailed upon the eldest son; and this was justly understood to confer a dignity and lustre, superior to all temporal blessings.

The guilt of Esau consisted, in undervaluing and despising an advantage so distinguished; which Jacob, on the contrary, estimated so highly as to be induced to use unjustifiable means to procure it. He did obtain the birth-right, but thereby he lost a brother; he stole by subtility the prophetic benediction, but he raised up against himself an implacable foe. He is

instantly constrained to become an exile and a wanderer from his father's house; and, when he comes to make the estimate of his own life, near the close of it, what is the amount? "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

Indeed, whilst he was practising deceit upon his nearest relatives in Canaan, Providence was silently preparing the means of requiting him in Padan-Aram, in the person of one already a near relation, and about to be much more closely allied to him, Laban the Syrian, a man much more cunning and selfish, and much less scrupulous than himself; a man who appears, from first to last, invariably attached to his own interest; and so greedy and mercenary, as not to prize any thing but as it ministered to his gain. Such was the man with whom Jacob was to spend a very considerable part of his life; and whose treatment of him, will, in the eyes of the severest judge, be a sufficient punishment for the fallacies he had practised at home.

Behold, then, in the covenant head, and representative of the holy family, a "Syrian ready to perish!" leaving his father's house, without an attendant, without a guide, without a companion; and the affliction of his banishment greatly increased by the consciousness

that he had brought it on himself, and by the necessity of enduring it, for wearisome days and nights, by himself alone. Having grasped at more than was right, and hastened to preferment without waiting for Providence, he puts himself just so much further back. Seeking rule and pre-eminence in his father's family, he finds severity and servitude in the house of a stranger. If men will carve for themselves, they must not charge the consequences of their rashness and presumption, upon the Divine Being.

The scripture informs us, Esau knew of the journey, and the occasion of it; it is therefore probable that Jacob stole away secretly, and without any retinue; the better to elude the vigilance and resentment of his brother, who, he had reason to apprehend, would pursue him to take away his life. Esau had not only despised the counsel of his father, by marrying into an idolatrous family, but insulted his parents, in the highest degree, by bringing, at one time, two wives of that description. The disappointment and vexation consequent upon a step so imprudent, is feelingly set forth in the language of Rebekah: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which

are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?"

We have hitherto exhibited little more than the shades of Jacob's character; we shall now bring forward some of the bright and amiable parts of it. Like those who have set their affections on things that are above, Jacob seems to have determined upon pursuing the most glorious attainments. In the ardour of this pursuit, in one instance, he had undoubtedly been precipitated into a wrong course for the acquisition of the object in view; and, in another, maternal influence had been exerted, and advantage taken of his inexperience.

"But though some tinges of human frailty, in these instances, are observable, we have not any reason to conclude that his heart was not right in the sight of God; for in the important concern of marriage, we find him piously regarding the counsel and solicitude of his parents, that the worship of the true God might be preserved in the family. This disposition of mind was blessed in an extraordinary manner; for in the hour of his extremity, in the wilderness, when he had only a stone for his pillow, he was favoured with the vision of the ladder, and of the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said: "I am

the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed; and, behold! I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Here is a renewal of the promise to Abraham, and to his seed after him. Jacob's promptitude of acknowledgment of so great a favour, is beautifully displayed in his rising early, and immediately erecting a monument of such simple materials as the place afforded, to the memory of this heavenly vision, which he was desirous to impress on his heart for ever. The stone which had been his pillow, he set up for a pillar, which he anointed, and consecrated to the honour of God, by the name of Bethel, that is, *the House of God;* and then he entered into a solemn vow unto the Lord. Animated by such a vision, Jacob doubtless went on his way rejoicing; and, under the guidance and direction of an indul-

gent Providence, arrived at Padan-Aram in safety.

It was that simple age of the world, in which the chief occupation and enjoyments of human nature, were seen in the shepherd's life; while as yet, gold had not determined the value of intellectual, as well as natural productions; while as yet, commerce had not opened her ten thousand channels of luxury, to enervate and corrupt mankind.

His conversation with the shepherds of Haran, must always afford delight to those, whose taste is not debauched by the frippery of modern manners, and the affectation of cermony and compliment; who can relish the honest simplicity of nature, and the genuine expression of unaffected kindness and benevolence.

While they are speaking, Rachel draws nigh with her fleecy charge; and Jacob, with the ardour natural to a manly spirit, and the zeal of an affectionate relative, runs forward to salute, and assist his fair kinswoman. Little offices of civility, are the natural effusions of a good and honest heart: they often suggest the first sentiment of love, both to those who confer, and to those who receive them; and they keep love alive when it is kindled. Rebekah had been courted by proxy, with presents and promises;

Rachel is courted by her husband in person, with the looks, the language, and the service of love. Their attachment to each other, did not long escape the penetrating eye of the crafty father, and uncle; who, from the time he observed it, considered how best to convert it to his own advantage.

Jacob had for some time, unsolicited, and without any stipulation, rendered his best services to Laban for nothing; his principal object being to render himself agreeable, to his amiable cousin. When therefore Laban, who must clearly have foreseen the answer, under an affected regard to the interest of his relation, inquired into the condition of his future services, Jacob, without hesitation, mentions a marriage with his younger daughter; and, having no marriage portion to give the father, as the custom of the times required, he offers as an equivalent, seven years of personal servitude and labour. The proposal is no sooner made than accepted; and Laban has the satisfaction of betrothing his daughter, to wealthy Isaac's son and heir; and of securing for himself the emolument of Jacob's labour, for seven good years. Thus the rights of humanity, the laws of hospitality, and the ties of consanguinity, are all made basely to truckle, to the most sordid of all human passions; and

the free born grandson of Abraham sinks into abject servitude.

But he bears with patience and cheerfulness, the ardour of the meridian sun, and the cold chilling damps of the evening, so long as he has access to the company and conversation of his beloved Rachel; and though he served seven years for her, they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her. When he had faithfully fulfilled his part of the engagement, he calls upon Laban to perform what was incumbent upon him.

The better to conceal the fraud he was meditating, Laban feigns compliance, and amuses Jacob with all the usual apparatus of a marriage feast. According to the custom of the eastern nations, the bride was conducted to the bed of her husband with silence, in darkness, and covered from head to foot with a veil; circumstances all of them favourable to the wicked, selfish plan, which Laban had formed to detain his son-in-law longer in his service. And Leah is substituted in the room of her sister.

Here we see, that he, who, by subtilty and falsehood, substituted himself for his brother Esau, in stealing away the blessing, is punished, for his deceit, by finding a Leah where he expected a Rachel. He who employed undue

advantage to arrive at the right of the first born, has undue advantage taken of him, in having the first born put in the place of the younger. He who could practise upon a father's blindness, though to obtain a laudable end, is, in his turn, practised upon by a father employing the cover of night, to accomplish a very unwarrantable purpose. Laban was base, treacherous, and wicked; but Providence is wise, holy, and just. Let the man who dares to do evil that good may come of it, look at Jacob, and blush. The shame, vexation, and distress, of such a disappointment are more readily imagined than described.

Laban, as avarice seldom chooses to avow its real motive, endeavours to justify his treachery and breach of faith, by a pretended regard to the custom of the country, which permitted not the younger to be given in marriage before the first born. An honest man would have given this information, when the bargain was first proposed; it was an insult, not an indemnification, to produce it now. The man, who, last night, shuddered at violating a foolish and absurd custom of the country, is not ashamed, the next morning, to propose polygamy and incest; and to make his own children the instruments. What does it concern him, that disorder and distress

are introduced into his daughter's family, so long as it can any how redound to his private benefit?

If another has any thing like a weak side, avarice is quick sighted as the eagle to discern it; and not more penetrating to discover, than dexterous to convert it to his own advantage. Laban, who had seen his flocks and herds multiply, and his wealth increase under Jacob's care, builds, upon his unabated attachment to Rachel, the project of a further continuance of Jacob's servitude. The proposal which avarice made without a blush, love accepted, with perhaps too much precipitation. For we have not any reason to suppose, Jacob was desirous of a plurality of wives: much less of assuming the sister of his beloved Rachel, to be her rival in his affections. It does not appear that the solemnization of Jacob's marriage with Rachel, was deferred till the expiration of the second term of seven years. Provided Laban obtained sufficient security for the performance of the agreement, it was indifferent to him when Jacob got possession of the bride.

Hitherto the profits of Jacob's industry had been wholly his uncle's; he had most ungene-

rously taken advantage of his nephew's attachment to his daughter, to reduce him to a mere drudge for his own interest. He is at length constrained to consent to Jacob's sharing the fruit of his own labour, that he may provide for his own family.

Laban's craftiness would have proved too hard for Jacob's candour and integrity; but Divine wisdom, at length, proved more than a match for even the cunning of a Laban. Jacob proposes, as his hire, such a part of the flocks which he fed, as should be in future produced of a certain description. The device which he employed, and which seems to have been suggested to him in a dream, is well known to all who read the Scriptures. The success of it, must be attributed to a miraculous interposition. Hereby the condition of Jacob, was speedily and wonderfully changed for the better: "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid servants, and men servants, and camels, and asses." Herein is the world instructed, that he who fears and follows God, will, sooner or later, find his reward.

Jacob soon perceives the discontent of Laban and his sons, and judges it better for all parties that they should separate. The dialogue be-

tween Jacob and his wives on this occasion, extends our knowledge of the distresses he had experienced, and exhibits the picture of a covetous man in strong colours. From it we learn that the sordid father, not contented with exacting from his son-in-law the rigorous performance of his hard bargain, had frequent recourse to trick and chicanery, to overreach and defraud him.

"Ye know," says Jacob, "that with all my power I have served your father, and your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. And Rachel and Leah answered, is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not accounted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money." Providence, however, in spite of Laban, fulfils to Jacob the covenant and promise, entered into at Bethel. Jacob had stipulated only for bread to eat, and raiment to put on, whilst he was from home; and a safe return to his father's house; but blessings are showered upon him beyond his expectation, and far exceeding his desires. And the God of Bethel, who now directs him to return to the land of his kindred, warns Laban, in a dream by night, not to molest him.

How noble is the disdain which Jacob expresses on being charged with the theft of Laban's gods! How manly the recapitulation of his past services, and sufferings! How bold the defiance he bids to malice, and resentment! "What is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, What hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren, and thy brethren, that they may judge between us both. These twenty years have I been with thee, thy ewes, and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock, have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was, in the day, drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes; thus I have been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty! God hath seen my affliction, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."

The power of truth is irresistible. Laban, though with an ill grace, is constrained to yield to it, and matters are at length amicably settled; but with the solemnities of a sacrifice, an oath, and a monumental pillar. Laban, who had the wicked intention, and the guilty conscience, is most eager to resort to the sanction of oaths and promises. He knew that he himself needed to be bound, and therefore judges it necessary to bind another; laws are for the violent and injurious; covenants for the false and perfidious: the light of an upright heart is a law; the conscience of an honest man a faithful witness and judge.

From Laban having gods in his possession, it may be inferred, that his family had been brought up with ideas of their superintendence and protection. Rachel having become a mother, we cannot imagine an occasion in which maternal solicitude for the safety of her children, would be more excited, than when she had in prospect, not only the quitting for ever of her father's house, but her native country, and travelling into a distant land to sojourn. Anxiety for the welfare of her family would naturally induce her, at such a time, to make use of every means, which might conduce to their preserva-

tion in so hazardous an undertaking. Whether she thought it necessary to carry along with her some of her father's images for protection, we are not informed; but had not this circumstance come to our knowledge, we should have wholly at a loss to account for the occasion of the charge which Jacob, afterwards, gave to his household: "Put away the strange gods that are among you; arise, let us go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

Jacob had gone to Padan-Aram that he might avoid all connexion with idolatry; little expecting, we may conclude, that he should find the house of his uncle not free from it. Considering how long he had been in it, it is rather extraordinary that he had not himself been drawn into idolatrous superstition. But to detail the varied occurrences of Jacob's life, as recorded in the Scriptures, would not consist with the design of this work; which is to bring forward those parts of history that most strikingly display Providential interposition, direction, and control. Few men experienced greater reverses of condition, than our patriarch; but we find he gathered strength from the hardships which he endured; supporting a life of unutterable afflic-

tion with the greatest fortitude; suffering as a man, but enduring and overcoming as a saint.

One general remark may be applied to his whole history. His deepest distresses sprung out of his choicest comforts; his most signal successes took their rise from his heaviest afflictions. The attainment of the birth-right and blessing, drive him into banishment; the labour, watchfulness, and anxiety of a shepherd's life, conduct him to opulence and importance. The elevation he too eagerly grasped at, was the cause of his depression; the humiliation to which he patiently submitted, became the foundation of his future greatness. We cannot think Jacob attained to much practical religion in the house of his father, at Lahai-roi; but he has an opportunity of learning it in silence and solitude, in the plains of Luz. It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth; at ease we forget God; in retirement and danger, we call to remembrance a long forgotten, but Almighty Benefactor; and learn to feel our dependance upon Him.

The partial fondness of Rebekah, had exposed her son to the unnatural unkindness and severity of an uncle; the jealousy and envy of malevolent, selfish brothers-in-law, drive him back to

the calm delights of his father's house. And Jacob closes the extended scene of wo with the triumph of a believer, looking forward to bright, unclouded prospects of immortality.

CHAPTER XVI.

JACOB AND JOSEPH.

JACOB had this consolation under all his afflictions, that divine favour and regard were vouchsafed to him in a peculiar manner. No sooner had he parted from his father-in-law Laban, than the angels of God met him; and when he drew near to Esaux, there wrestled with him a man until the breaking of the day, whom he afterwards describes as God, and against whom he prevailed in the contest. In consequence he obtained a new and honourable name, which obliterated that less honourable appellation, commemorating a little insignificant incident attending his birth, and which recorded the infamy of his unfair dealings with his father

x A more striking specimen of self-abasement, humility and simplicity, we shall not find, than that which is contained in Jacob's prayer: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff, I passed over this Jordan, and now, I am become two bands."

and brother. Jacob which signifies *Supplanter*, is transformed into Israel, *a Prince with God*; with this testimony: "For as a prince, hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." What could be a greater encouragement to him, when he was just at the point of meeting his brother Esau, who was advancing towards him with 400 men, and conscious as he was of having given much cause of offence? But we are the fittest for every service, for every trial, when we have settled matters with our gracious and heavenly Protector. He, who by a touch disjointed Jacob's thigh, could by a word have scattered Esau's host. But behold, a greater miracle! By a simple act of his sovereign will, He has in a moment changed Esau's heart. They meet, they converse, they love, as brothers ought to love.

After this, Esau returned to his possession in Mount-Seir, with the present his brother had made him; and Jacob pursued his journey to Canaan. According to the promise and covenant of the God of Bethel, ratified more than twenty years before, he arrives in peace and safety at Shechem, the city of Hamor, the Hivite, of whom he bought a field; in the same place Abraham first pitched his tent, upon coming into Canaan. There he erected an altar, and dedicated it, by

the name of El-elohe-Israel, *God, the God of Israel.* This event happened in the year of the world 2266; before Christ 1738 years; after the flood 610, and in the 98th year of Jacob's life. Isaac, his father, was then living at Beersheba, 157 years old.

Jacob, after an absence of more than 20 years, has returned to the land of his nativity. He has purchased an estate; he has spread his tent; he has erected his altar; his mountain stands strong. But perhaps the life of no other man, affords a like instance of accumulated distress; for his heaviest afflictions spring up out of objects from which the heart most seeks and expects delight. His only daughter, prompted by female vanity, or some motive equally deserving blame, ventures unattended beyond the verge of paternal protection, and falls into danger and shame. Two of her brothers, Simeon and Levi, fired with indignation at the treatment of their sister, concert a plan for destroying all the inhabitants of Shechem. They rush upon them, and put them all to the sword.

We no where meet with an instance of more savage, indiscriminating barbarity. For the offence of one, a whole nation is mercilessly cut off; and rapine closes the scene of blood; for they plundered the city, and carried off captives

the wretched women, whose husbands they had slain. It is matter of surprise that it did not occasion a confederacy of the neighbouring states, to exterminate such a band of robbers and murderers from the face of the earth. Jacob is justly alarmed with the apprehension of this, and, warned of God, removes from the neighbourhood of Shechem, to Bethel; a spot that brought to his recollection calmer, happier days; when he had been blessed with the visions of the Almighty on his way to Padan-Aram.

As if it was necessary to avert Divine vengeance, he now purges his family of every vestige of idolatry. We may conclude it was no easy matter, when they lived in an idolatrous country, to avoid superstitious ideas respecting worship.

While Jacob was on his way from Bethel, to present to his venerable parents, the wives and children which God had given him, Rachel, his much beloved Rachel, died by the way, after bearing him another son, to whom she gave the name of Benomi, that is, "*the son of my sorrow.*" It was wise and pious of the father, to preserve rather the memory of the benefit received, than of the loss sustained, by substituting the name of Benjamin, *the son of my right hand;* to mark and record submission to, and trust in Providence,

rather than perpetuate his grief by retaining the maternal appellation. While this wound was still bleeding, the patriarch's heart was pierced through with another stroke, if not so acute, perhaps more overwhelming.

His eldest son, Reuben, degrades and dishonours himself by the commission of a crime, which modesty blushes to think of, "and such as is not so much as named among the Gentiles." We might sit and weep awhile over the grave of Rachel; but from the incestuous couch of Reuben imagination flies with horror and disgust. Judah, his fourth son, had connected himself with a Canaanitish woman, whose progeny involved him in complicated guilt, and covered him with shame.

What a licentious, irregular, and disorderly family, is the family of pious Jacob! After an absence of more than 20 years, Jacob had rejoined his aged father, then in his 163d year, at Arbah, afterwards called Hebron, the city where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

What must have been the delight of a parent at embracing a long lost, darling son! and at finding him abundantly increased, in children and in wealth! Jacob must have been agitated by various and mixed emotions. It would be natural for the old man to inquire into the charac-

ter and qualities of his grand-children. The answer to these inquiries, must have awakened, in the bosom of the father, very painful and melancholy sensations. But it might be some alleviation to Jacob, to have the privilege of pouring his sorrows into the bosom of a father; who, from his own experience, would be qualified to apply the sovereign balm to the aching heart of his son.

But the calamities of neither father nor son, are yet come to a period; for in little more than six years from their re-union, Joseph, the memorial of Rachel, the delight of Jacob, the prop of Isaac's old age, disappeared, and was not heard of till his venerable grandsire, had slept many years in the dust. Jacob, under the pressure of a burden nature was scarcely able to sustain, was called upon to perform the last sad office of filial affection, and to lay his hands upon the already extinguished orbs of his honoured father.

Jacob's fondness for his son Joseph, must have in some degree blinded his judgment. He exposes him to the jealousy and to the hatred of his connections, by dressing his darling in a coat of many colours. What a foundation of mischief here was laid! The brothers must have been less inflammable than they were well known to

be, not to have taken fire at this indiscreet distinction; and Joseph must possess more firmness and self-denial, than the age of seventeen generally discovers, if he had not some transient emotions of vanity, and self-sufficiency.

The history of Jacob's family, exhibits a shocking view of manners and of society, at that period. They digest and execute a plan of murder, with as much coolness as we should an improvement in agriculture, or an adventure in trade. It is no wonder that the poor Shechemites found no pity at thier hands, when they are so lost to the feelings of filial duty, as to deliberate and determine upon, their own brother's death.

The trifling incident of the dreams lies rankling in their bosom: "Behold," say they, "this dreamer cometh." The horror of being cast alive into a pit to perish with hunger, is not to be conceived, much less expressed. What must it then be to a heart like Joseph's, acquainted, till then, with only gentleness and indulgence? As if his brethren had done nothing amiss, they sit down to eat bread. And now, behold the darling of Jacob on the very brink of despair; when Providence, wiser than they were cunning, and more powerful than they were wicked, interposes for his deliverance! The circumstances which appeared so unfa-

vourable to Joseph, work together for the preservation of his life, and pave the way to glory.

Had he not, when seeking his brethren, wandered in the field, his arrival had happened too early for the passing by of the Ishmaelites to save him; had he found his brethren in Shechem, as he expected, instead of Dothan, he had been out of the track which his deliverers took.—Who can tell what is good or evil for a man, till the end come, and the mystery of Providence is unfolded?—These, to the eye of
B. C. 1720. man, are little accidental circumstances; but they are part of a vast arrangement made by Him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, to bring about a great purpose. There are wheels almost imperceptible in the great machine, which the untutored eye is apt wholly to overlook; but which are as necessary to motion as the largest and most obvious.

Thus was the jewel of his father vilely bartered away, as a thing of little value. Behold then, Joseph in the hands of the descendants of him, "whose hands were against every man, and every man's hand against him!" And he is safer with the wild Ishmaelites, than with bloody unnatural brothers. Reuben, it

seems, was not present at their consultation, bargain, and delivery. He is the only one of the brothers that seems to have felt a single spark of pity for the afflicted youth[x], or concern for the distress of his aged parent; who must have been overwhelmed with despair, when the bloody coat was presented to him.

Joseph becomes an illustrious example of a mind unsubdued by the deepest distress; uncorrupted by the highest degree of elevation.

His affliction commenced at an early period of life; it was in its kind peculiarly bitter, and severe; it came from a quarter which was the least to be apprehended; and the transition was instantaneous, from a tranquillity and indulgence which knew no bounds, to anguish which no language can express, no imagination can conceive.

As he was to be an eminent type of Him, "who as a lamb dumb before his shearers, opened not his mouth," the Scriptures represent Joseph submitting to the barbarous treatment of his brethren, as doomed to perish of hunger in an empty pit, and sold into slavery.

x Perhaps Judah's proposal of selling Joseph, was not prompted merely by compunction at the idea of killing his brother; but might be mingled with some emotions of tenderness and feeling for his distress.

Re-sold by the Ishmaelites, he lives, and prospers in a strange land. A young man like him, brought up in fulness, liberty, and ease, might have been supposed stubborn and sullen, under a change of condition so sudden and severe; or to have sunk into melancholy and despair. But Joseph, with true magnanimity, accommodates his mind to his situation, and, without murmur or reluctance, applies himself to the discharge of his duty, as a diligent and faithful servant.

The favourite son of Jacob is degraded and dishonoured, even when raised to the first rank of servitude in Potiphar's house. But Joseph, pious, modest, wise, and faithful, is equally respectable whether as a son or a servant. Divine blessings are showered upon Potiphar's house, as soon as Joseph enters into it.

Joseph demeaned himself as a good servant, Potiphar as a wise, and kind master: "He made him overseer of his house; and all that he had, he put into his hand."

Joseph was a goodly person and well favoured. Beauty, like every other gift, is to be received with thankfulness. But how often does it prove a snare to the possessor, and a temptation to others! Joseph's personal accomplishments, seemed likely to prove more ruinous to him, than

even the envy of his brothers. His master's wife looks upon him with eyes of unhallowed affection; and attempts to make him a partaker of her impurity. Joseph dwells only on one circumstance to settle and determine his conduct; the all-seeing eye of God, and the danger of offending Him: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The consequence to Joseph was such as might be expected, from the temper of a lascivious and resentful woman. She accuses of an attempt to seduce her, the man, whom no consideration of pleasure or advantage, could induce to forsake the right path. This accusation, however false, being uncontradicted, is admitted as true; and Joseph, notwithstanding his faithfulness, is immured in close custody, to be dragged forth at a proper opportunity to severer punishment.

He is willing to sink under the weight of a false accusation, rather than by vindicating his own honour, expose the shame of a bad woman; and he leaves the clearing up of his character, and the preservation of his life, to that God with whom he had entrusted still higher concerns.

Here we see the least assuming virtues, temperance, chastity, innocence, and self-government, become a foundation in the time of trial, for the most unshaken courage, manly constancy, intrepidity, and even contempt of death.—No place is frightful to a good man, but the dungeon of an evil conscience.—Free from that, Joseph is at large, though in prison. It is the favour, or displeasure of an Almighty Judge, that makes this, or the other spot, comfortable, or irksome: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." But to the guilty, the whole world is a place of confinement. God, who delivered him out of the pit, accompanies him to the prison; and what heart so savage that goodness cannot mollify? What nature so obdurate that the power of the Almighty cannot reach?

The character of a goaler implies sternness and severity; but we find this good young man in high favour with his keeper. Wherever we find Joseph, in Potiphar's house, in prison, or at court, we find a man faithful, diligent, and trusty; and we find him honoured, esteemed, and confided in, by all with whom he had any connexion.

By a strange concurrence of circumstances, which the divine Providence alone could have

brought together, Joseph has for his fellow prisoners, two of the chief officers of the king of Egypt, who had fallen under their master's displeasure, and had been for some time in confinement, uncertain of their doom.

The great God is whetting his instruments, making his arrangements, marshalling his forces, at very different times and in many different places. The envy of Jacob's sons, the lasciviousness of Potiphar's wife, the disobedience of Pharaoh's servants, the anger of the king himself, all, all meet in one point, the elevation of Joseph to the right hand of the throne. Had one link been removed, the chain would have been broken asunder. But this work and counsel are of God, and therefore cannot be overthrown. And it is not at all surprising that He who had been thus preparing the work, should bring it to a conclusion by the dreams of the chief butler, and the chief baker of Pharaoh, and by means of the supernatural interpretation which Joseph gave of them. B. C. 1715.

How much wiser, how much more noble are they who live in communion with God, than other men! For though they do not all attain the gift of prophecy, yet they are all dignified with the spirit of prayer, the spirit of adoption,

the spirit of faith, the spirit of love and of a sound mind.

Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, carried conviction along with it, and removed, from Pharaoh, all the prejudices which frequently hinder persons in high stations, from submitting to the evidence of truth, and acknowledging an understanding superior to their own. It made him understand, that a mere human wisdom, would not be sufficient to execute what had been suggested to him, by wisdom from above; and that it would be vain to seek out for any other minister than God had chosen: "Can we find," says Pharaoh, "such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?"

In speaking thus, Pharaoh entirely reformed the errors of a false policy, which considers virtue and religion as unserviceable in the government of a state, and finds an exact probity too great a check upon its views and projects. This stupid impiety is exposed to shame by an infidel king. He is convinced that the more of the Spirit of God a minister has, the more capable he is of governing a kingdom.—And the least attention suffices to discover, that the opposite principle flows from the utter want of human understanding.

Every step Joseph treads through the valley of humiliation, is a progressive advancement to glory. Behold him then, conducted to the right hand of the throne! Behold him ready to mount the second chariot, while admiring nations proclaim before him: "Bow the knee!"

Hunter's Sacred Biography.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOSEPH.

"IF it is pleasant, in particular instances, to observe Divine Providence justifying its own procedure, by relieving and vindicating oppressed innocence, or by precipitating prosperous guilt from its lofty seat; what must be the satisfaction and delight of beholding the whole plan of Providence unfolded; every mystery explained, and all the ways of God to men completely vindicated!

A very considerable part of our distress, arises from hastiness and impatience of spirit. We are for rushing to the end at once; we will not afford our Maker and Ruler leisure to open his designs, to illustrate his own meaning. We would have the work of Heaven performed in our own way; we have settled the whole order of things in our own mind; and all is wrong that ignorance, fretfulness, and presumption, are pleased to dislike. Cloudy, rainy weather is much less agreeable than serenity; yet it requires but a moment's reflection to be convinced,

that continual sunshine would be the reverse of a blessing to mankind.

The alternate succession of day and night, of fair weather and rain, has not greater beauty and utility in the world of nature, than are to be seen in the shades of adversity, and the sun beams of prosperity, which successively appear on the face of the moral world.

If there is a passage in history, which, more than another, encourages us patiently and submissively to wait for the end, to follow and submit to the conduct of Providence, it is the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob. He who foresaw the dangers and temptations to which Joseph would be exposed, in future, by his extraordinary elevation, prepared him for it, by long exercise in the school of affliction.

Thus he deals with his children. He strengthens them in patience and humility; and does not expose them to temptation till they are duly prepared for it. Who does not rejoice to see the same person who diligently and humanely served the gaoler, humbly yet attentively conducting the affairs of a mighty empire, as a minister of state? on which this observation may be founded, that the fear of God, is the best security for a man's good behaviour in every situation. And that he is

not to be trusted in any thing, who has not conscience in every thing.

Egypt gloried that she was not, like other countries, dependant on the clouds of heaven for the fertility of her soil, and the exuberance of her crops; but that she derived her rich harvests from the flux and reflux of her own river. In vain, however, had the Nile arisen to the desired height during seven years of uncommon plenteousness, had not the prophetic foresight of Joseph, laid up a foundation for the time to come.

We are now brought to the years of a famine, so great that it extended over all the face of the earth; and all countries came into Egypt, to Joseph, to buy corn. But when his ten brethren present themselves before him, who is quite unknown to them, though they stand well known and confessed to him; when he learns that his tender father is still in the land of the living, that his dearest brother, his own mother's son is also alive with him, and in health. What must his emotions have been! We can believe that the sovereignty of Egypt, would not yield him a satisfaction so sincere. But the singularity of the situation in which Joseph now stood, suggested, no doubt, the experiment he makes upon the temper and character of his brothers. Treated as spies, roughly spoken to, their most solemn

protestations disregarded, put in prison, and bound; their treatment of Joseph rushes upon their memory, in all its guilt and horror; and they mutually upbraid, and reproach each other with their barbarity, "saying one to another; We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore also his blood is required."

Perhaps never before, were they brought to so close consideration of their crime. Joseph gives them an opportunity of wiping away their guilt by the self accusation, the penitence and sorrow which are brought over them on this occasion. Hearing himself mentioned with so much tenderness and regret, by persons once so cruel, the pretended Egyptian, in spite of himself, becomes a real Israelite. The tears steal into his eyes; and, to prevent a premature discovery, he is obliged to retire, to recompose himself.

The sight of his own brother becomes an object so near his heart, that on his returning and renewing the conversation, he assumes the Lord of Egypt, sets nine at liberty, binds Simeon before their eyes, and commits him to close confinement, as a hostage for their coming again, together with Benjamin their brother. On their

return with him, it appears Joseph could not suppress excessive kindness and hospitality; though he afterwards meditated a scheme to put their attachment to their father, and to their brother, to the test.

When they were admitted into the presence of the lord of Egypt, they prostrated themselves to the earth before him. On this it may be remarked, in vain do men set themselves to counteract the decrees of Heaven; the dream of the sheaves making obeisance to his sheaf, is now accomplished. But when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, they all offer themselves to become Joseph's servants.

The expostulation of Judah on this occasion, possesses uncommon grace and tenderness, and penetrates the heart of Joseph. The affectionate manner in which his father was mentioned, the unfeigned earnestness expressed to save him from the impending blow; the generosity of the offer to put himself in Benjamin's place, to purchase a father's comfort, and a brother's release at the price of his own liberty; all this satisfies him that time, affliction, and a sense of duty, had introduced another and a happier spirit into the family.

Then Joseph could not any longer refrain himself, and he cried: "Cause every man to go out

from me; and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren. And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians, and the house of Pharaoh heard. Then his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence." How admirable is the tenderness and condescension of Joseph, in immediately administering the greatest consolation! "Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life: to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

In this address of Joseph's, it is not easy to determine which part of it is most to be admired, his magnanimity in pardoning offences so atrocious, losing sight of the criminals in the brothers; his skill in adapting his arguments so exactly to the circumstances of the case; his humility in carrying the spirit and temper of the lowliest condition, into the loftiest and most corruptive station of worldly grandeur; or his pure and fervent piety, in acknowledging all that had come to pass, as the design and co-operation of Heaven.

What language can convey an adequate idea of Joseph's feelings, glowing with the expectation of once more beholding his venerable sire; of being pressed to his bosom; of cherishing his

declining years! or describe a heart melting into sympathy, forgiveness, and brotherly love; exulting in the joy of rendering good for evil! a heart lost in wonder, and overflowing with gratitude, while it contemplated the wisdom and the goodness of an all-ruling Providence, in producing such events, by means so incomprehensible!

In Pharaoh, we have an amiable instance of qualities too rarely to be found in the character of princes. He cheerfully confirms all the engagements of his minister; though they extended to the disposing of the land of Goshen, which was a province of the lower Egypt, on the east side of the Nile, bordering upon Arabia, and a frontier to Palestine, and best adapted to the feeding of cattle.

Pharaoh outruns the wishes and desires of even filial affection and duty, and strives to repay the kindness of Joseph, whom God has made a father to him, by becoming a shield and protection to his father's house. And is the sun at length going to arise upon Jacob's hoary head? And shall the heart so long dead to joy, yet once more awake to transport? We cannot conceive a greater earthly joy than that which fills the heart of a parent, when he hears of the wisdom, the virtue, and the prosperity, of a darling child. If any sorrow admits not of consolation, it is the

sorrow of a father for the vice or folly of a thankless son; and for the misery in which he has plunged himself. The patriarch Jacob had felt both these in the extreme.

Joseph hastens the return of his brethren, and provides them with every accommodation, for the safe and comfortable removal of their aged father, and their tender children. As he distinguished Benjamin, at table, by a five-fold portion, he distinguishes him, at parting, with a more splendid and costly present, consisting of three hundred pieces of silver, and four changes of raiment. In a wardrobe of great value and variety, a considerable part of ancient magnificence consisted. Sampson proposed as a reward to him who should expound his riddle, "thirty changes of garments." Under the first Roman emperors, the like vanity and extravagance were carried to such an excessive pitch, that the prætor Lucullus, according to Plutarch, had two hundred changes of apparel. And Horace insinuates in one of his epistles, that, by some, the luxury was carried to the enormous extravagance of five thousand suits.

The utmost height of Jacob's expectation was to behold his youngest son again, and to have a supply of corn for his starving family. But to hear that his long lost, much lamented Joseph,

was still living; that he was the ruler of all Egypt, the saviour of a great nation, the father of a mighty prince; Oh! it is,—it is too much;—nature tottering under a load of wo, now sinks and faints from excess of joy. The good man has been so long a stranger to felicity, that the possibility of it is called in question, and he slowly yields to the sweet demonstration. Convinced at length, what joy is equal to the joy of Jacob!—Is it not worth wading through a sea of trouble to come to such a shore at length? The blessings of Providence are well worth waiting for; they compensate, in a moment, for all the pain and misery that may have been endured.

But our patriarch is not merely following the impulse of natural affection, in going down to Egypt; besides making prudent provision for his numerous and increasing family, he is listening to a special call from Heaven. Before he leaves Canaan, he visits Beersheba, and there renews his covenant with God by sacrifice. Those enterprises are most likely to succeed, those comforts to afford most genuine satisfaction, in which God is seen and acknowledged. Israel is assured, in a vision, that he should arrive in safety, should prosper in Egypt; and that Joseph should put his hand upon his eyes; that is, perform the last office of filial duty and affection.

B. C. 1706. Now we behold Jacob removing for the third time, richer than ever, both in real possessions, and in prospects; but bending under the pressure of age and concomitant infirmities, when going down into Egypt.

His family, including the addition of what Joseph had, now amounted to seventy individuals.—The priest of On's daughter, whose alliance was doubtless intended as an honour to Joseph, is ennobled by being ranked in the family of Jacob, and by becoming a mother in Israel.—And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to Goshen, to meet Israel his father; and presented himself unto him, and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph: "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

The interview which afterwards took place, between the venerable patriarch and the good king of Egypt, is highly interesting and instructive. Old age and virtue are honoured with royal regard and attention. Royalty is instructed, admonished, and blessed, by the wisdom of the sage, by the miseries of the man, by the piety and prayers of the prophet. Jacob's last days are by far his best.

He passed seventeen years of tranquillity in Egypt, enjoying the most complete of all human

gratifications, that of witnessing the prosperity, and experiencing the attachment, of a favourite, dutiful child. But one hundred and thirty years of wo and seventeen of comfort, came to a period. And though Jacob is satisfied to live and die in Egypt, he feels and expresses the natural desire of all men, that his ashes should rest, in death, with those of his forefathers.

When Joseph attended upon his father to receive his last dying commands, his paternal benediction, Jacob could not discern the nearest objects, could not even distinguish the sons of Joseph; but the spirit of prophecy which was in him, penetrated through the shades of night, and contemplated with clearness and accuracy, ages the most remote; persons, situations, and events, the most distant. In this last interview with his beloved son, he declares his intention to raise Joseph's children, to the hereditary rank and honour in Israel; and he bequeaths to Joseph a particular possession, which he had acquired in Canaan, deeming him entitled, and not without reason, to the double portion of the first born; for his mother only was the wife of Jacob's choice; and had the course of justice and of reason taken place, he should have had no children but by her[k].

Bequeathing to Joseph a particular possession, may be thought a trivial circumstance to find a

place in a general history. In this light it might appear to many succeeding generations; but, after 1600 years, we find the transfer recognized, in a manner which furnishes a remarkable confirmation of the authenticity of Moses's history.—It discloses, at the same time, the curious information, that near to the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, was the well of which Jacob and his children used to drink; and at which his cattle were watered.—A situation which is rendered for ever afterwards memorable by the application of our Lord to the woman of Samaria, to give him to drink of this well.

In the converse to which this request gave rise, we have, under the similitude of water, one of the most striking illustrations of the spirituality of Christ's mission. The inward refreshment and solace of his Spirit, could not have been described by a more apt and beautiful figure: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and He would have given thee living water."

Doctrine more sublime could not have been inculcated, nor with more admirable simplicity.

The patriarch predicted the future condition of his grand-children by Joseph; and foretold that the younger should in time obtain the pre-emi-

nence. But the particulars of his last will, or rather the will of God, respecting his posterity for many generations, must be the subject of another chapter, in which we may have an opportunity of tracing, in some degree, what Joseph foresaw and foretold.

"The account of Jacob is at length closed, and the balance struck; and how does it stand? A life of 147 years in all; of which, not above a ninth part passed in any tolerable degree of ease and comfort! The early, the susceptible part of his life, was filled with a succession of distresses of the most disastrous and overwhelming nature; but let us turn to the other side of the account. There we perceive that Divine favour which had been early declared on his behalf, was continued for his support. The covenant promise, and the presence of the Almighty; the illustrious situation and virtues of his beloved son; seventeen years of uninterrupted quiet; with growing prospects of prosperity to his family; and the consolation of expiring at last in the arms of Joseph, were Jacob's reward. Who shall dare to say, God has dealt hardly with him?

The patriarch makes a greater figure in death, than ever he had done in his life. The house of Israel, the seed of Abraham, is now beginning to make a considerable figure in the world.

B. C. 1689. Egyptians forego their prejudices to do honour to the remains of the old shepherd of Beersheba. Threescore and ten days were necessary to embalm him, after the manner of the princes of Egypt; forty in filling the body with aromatic drugs; and thirty in hardening, and drying it with salt and nitre; which accounts for the time of the mourning of the Egyptians.

At the death of his father, Joseph was 56 years old. The history of the remainder of his life, shrinks into a few short sentences.—He had the satisfaction of living to see his posterity of the fourth generation, by Ephraim, his younger son; and of the third, by Manasseh, his first born. He beheld Israel greatly increased, and the promise of God hastening to its accomplishment.

Jacob's life, of almost uninterrupted misery, is lengthened out to the 147th year.—Joseph's, with the exception of a few years, a scene of splendour, usefulness, and prosperity, is cut short at 110.—The dead body of Joseph became no inconsiderable object in the history of Israel, from this time to the final settlement in Canaan. With much pomp it was embalmed, with much care it was preserved; it accompanied them till they obtained possession in the land of promise, and till it was deposited in the tomb of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, was a man whom all nations, and every description of men, have united to praise and admire; whose character the pen of inspiration has delineated with singular accuracy, and with uncommon strength of colouring. In every stage of life he interests, instructs, and delights every reader of taste, virtue, and sensibility. He was a man who, in adversity, preserved inflexible constancy; and in elevation next to royalty, adorned his high station by unaffected simplicity, incorruptible integrity, unassuming dignity, fervent piety, great moderation, modesty, and humility; who, to the sagacity of the statesman, added the penetration of the prophet, the firmness of the believer, and the purity of the saint;—who, by the blessing of Providence, was saved through dangers the most threatening, to pity, to forgive, and to preserve, those who meant to have destroyed him; and who, in a word, was miraculously raised up from an obscure station, to be an instrument of much temporal good to nations; to mature and execute the plan of Eternal Wisdom, and to typify to a dark age, Him who is fairer than the children of men; and through whom all the blessings of nature, of Providence, and of redemption, are communicated to mankind.[k]

Joseph lived in Egypt ninety three years; a slave and prisoner thirteen; but for eighty years, a prince and ruler under several successive monarchs; being justly esteemed a necessary minister of state in all their reigns.

He died, before the birth of Moses, only 64 years; before the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, 144 years.

With the account of his death ends the book of Genesis, containing the most ancient, authentic, and interesting history, during the space of 2369 years; extending beyond the deluge, 713 years, and terminating 1635 years before the Christian era.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOSES.

WE are now to contemplate one of those rare examples of true greatness of mind, which make a voluntary sacrifice of the most enviable situation, and of the most flattering prospects which human life admits of; and that at an age when the heart is most devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, most susceptible of the allurements of ambition.

It is the singular instance of Moses, the prophet and legislator of Israel, brought up from infancy in a court, instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, treated as the heir of Empire, encouraged to aspire to all that the heart ardently covets, who, at the age of forty, cheerfully resigned all those advantages, and preferred the life of a slave with his brethren, and of a shepherd in the land of Midian, among strangers, before all the luxury and splendour, belonging to the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Scripture, in its own admirably concise method, dispatches the his-

tory of this great man's life, from his infancy to his fortieth year, in a few short words, namely: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds;" not deeming information concerning attainments in human science, or feats of martial prowess, worthy of the knowledge of posterity, compared with the triumphs of his faith, the generosity of his public spirit, and the noble ardour of fervent piety. He believed in God, the eye of his mind was fixed on Him who is invisible to the eye of sense. And what is the wisdom of Egypt compared with this!

It was a land of astronomers, a land of warriors, a land of artists; and the improvement which Moses made in every liberal art and science, we may well suppose, was equal to that of any of the nation or age in which he lived. But a principle infinitely superior to every thing human; a principle not taught in the schools of the philosophers: a principle that carries the soul beyond the limits of this little world, first taught him to despise and reject empty, unavailing worldly honours.

B. C. 1531.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Ordinary men, raised unexpectedly to eminence, strive to conceal the meanness of their extraction. But Moses would rather pass for

the son of a poor oppressed Israelite, than for the heir of the oppressing tyrant's daughter. And, no doubt, the Divine Instructer by whom his mind was raised above empty honours, opened his heart to feel for the afflictions of his brethren.

He was no longer able to relish a selfish gratification, when he knew that his nearest relatives were eating the bread, and drinking the water of affliction: he goes out to look upon their misery, and tries by kind looks, and words of love, to soothe their woes. But seeing a brutal Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, his zeal overleaps the bounds of patience and discretion; he assaults the oppressor, and even puts him to death. "Moses was meek above all the men of the earth." But surely oppression maketh a wise man mad.—This we allege as an apology for the conduct of Moses, not as a vindication of it.

When this rash action became publicly known and talked of, Moses fled out of Egypt to that part of Arabia which is called Petrea, from its rocky, mountainous aspect; and by a concurrence of circumstances, he is stopped at a city of that country called Midian, and induced to remain there many years.

There lived in that city, a person of distinguished rank and station. Whether he was a priest, or prince of Midian, the ambiguity of

the scripture term does not authorise us to determine: but we are left in no doubt respecting his moral and intellectual attainments. Whatever his dignity was, whether sacerdotal or royal, we find his daughters trained up in all the simplicity of those early times, following the humble, harmless occupation of shepherdesses.—Wise is that father, kind and just to his children, who, whatever his situation or prospects may be, brings up his sons and his daughters to some virtuous and useful employment; for idleness is not more odious and despicable, than it is inimical to happiness, and irreconcileable to inward peace.

Moses being arrived in the neighbourhood of Midian, weary and faint with a long journey through a barren and inhospitable country, sits down by a well of water to rest and refresh himself. As when Abraham's steward met with Rebekah at the well of the city of Nahor, and Jacob met Rachel at the well of Haran; so Moses meets the daughters of Raguel, just at the time when they stand in need of succour from the violence of some of their neighbours.

The precious fluid which is bestowed upon us in such profusion, being dispensed in that country as it were in drops, became an object of desire, and a ground of contention. The

daughters of Jethro being arrived at the well before some rival shepherds, were preparing to water their flocks, when behold, these brutals rudely drove them and their flocks away!

Moses possessing at once sensibility, courage, and strength, takes part with the injured, and affords them effectual support against their oppressors. In this little instance, he gave proof of qualifications to rescue and defend oppressed innocence.

If the generous spirit of Moses merits approbation and respect, the modest reserve of the virgin daughters of Raguel, is equally amiable and praise-worthy. They hasten home to their father, who, surprised at the earliness of their return, inquires into the cause of it. They were no doubt ready to celebrate the praises of a man who had so remarkably befriended them. Raguel, struck with the magnanimity and spirit of the stranger, eagerly inquires after him; invites him to his house and table; and that gratitude which the young women could not evince, he endeavours to express by every effort of kindness and hospitality. Minds so well assorted, as those of Moses and Jethro, and attracted to each other by mutual acts of beneficence, would easily assimilate, and unite in friendship.

That Providence which saved Moses forty years before from perishing in the Nile, which delivered him so lately from the hands of an incensed king; the same Providence now, by a concurrence of circumstances, equally beyond the reach of human power or foresight, fixes the bounds of his habitation; and, with one of the daughters of the priest of Midian, forms for him the most important connexion of human life; making him forget, for another space of forty years, the tumultuous pleasures of a court, in the more calm and rational delights of disinterested friendship, and of virtuous affection.

Erring, reasoning, cavilling men, will be asking, Why was the employment of Moses, in so important a service, delayed till he was eighty years of age? Why bury his talents for so long a time in the inglorious life of a shepherd? To which it may be answered, What other situation could be so favourable to his composing, by Divine inspiration, and committing to writing, that most ancient, most elegant, and most instructive of all narratives, which contains the history of the world, from the creation down to his own time? In this respect, there is reason to admire the procedure of Divine wisdom and goodness, in thus providing for the communication, to future generations, of knowledge so important.

Here also, and at this time, it has been conjectured by interpreters, Moses wrote that beautifully poetic, moral, and historical work, the book of Job; which, for sublimity of thought, force of expression, justness of sentiment, strength of reasoning, and variety of matter, holds a distinguished place in the sacred writings. If from the schools of the Magi, Moses had drawn such stores of wisdom and eloquence, our ideas would have risen very high, of the importance of these seminaries of learning.

But Moses derived his wonderful accomplishments from a much higher source; from the everlasting spring of all knowledge; even from Him who can make the desert of Horeb a school of wisdom; and the simple wiser than all their teachers!—We are now brought to that important and eventful period, when the shepherd of Midian, trained up in retirement, and contemplation, and converse with God, was to stand confessed the minister of the Most High; the king in Jeshurun, the scourge of Egypt, the deliverer of Israel.

The time to favour that oppressed, despised nation was come. Egypt had changed its sovereign, but the seed of Jacob felt no mitigation of their distress. Moses was in his 80th year, but he retained the full vigour of his bodily

strength, as well as of his mental powers. He had led the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, to the back side of the desert, and had come to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. Here, to his great surprise, he beheld a bush involved in flames without being consumed. On turning aside to examine the cause, his curiosity is turned into astonishment, the bush becomes vocal, as well as brilliant; and he hears his own name repeatedly and distinctly called out of the middle of the flame[k].

But the voice which solicited intercourse with Moses, sets a fence about the Divine Majesty, to convince him of the great disparity and impurity of the creature. Where God appears, there must be holiness; for all that is contrary to it, perishes at the rebuke of his countenance. Moses is commanded to put off his shoes, from off his feet. The words which follow, if any thing can increase their importance, derive a peculiar energy and value, to the christian world, as quoted by our blessed Lord, from an authority which the Sadducees could not deny, to confute them on the subject of the immortality of the soul: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

[k] We speak of the dead under the idea that they were: but God represents them as still

living; and his relation to them as unbroken; his care of them as uninterrupted. The effect which this declaration has upon Moses is such as might be expected; he hides his face, afraid to look upon God. It is ignorance of God, not intimate communion, which encourages forwardness and freedom. Angels, who know Him best, and love Him most, are most sensible of their distance; and are represented as covering their faces with their wings, when they approach their dread Creator.

Now that same Moses whom the children of Israel refused, saying: "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us;" is, after an interval of forty years, sent back to Egypt, to succour an oppressed and persecuted people.

As a historan, he has faithfully delineated his own diffidence and backwardness, in undertaking so awful a mission, until the anger of the Lord was kindled against him: "And He said: Is not Aaron, the Levite, thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold! he cometh forth to meet thee; and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart." Providence had been preparing a concluding and convincing proof of power, wisdom, and goodness inconceivable. For Aaron is already advanced far on his way from Egypt, in quest of his brother.

That, after so long an interval of separation, he should arrive at that instant of time, how is it to be accounted for? On no principle but this, that the Lord "is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." He seeth the end from the beginning. He saith: "My counsel shall stand, and I will fulfil all my pleasure. He doeth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

The unbelief of Moses met with forgiveness, and was cured by a series of miracles. The impiety and unbelief of Pharaoh met with correction and punishment, after his resisting the awful power of God, which had been manifested by a series of terrible judgments and miracles; not for the sake of Moses and Pharaoh merely, but to illustrate, in the eyes of the whole world, the goodness and severity of God Almighty.

The world might laugh at the idea of two old men issuing forth, the patrons of liberty, to force a mighty prince, and a powerful nation, to listen to the dictates of justice and humanity; and to liberate a million of wretched creatures, whose spirits were so broken by their miseries, that they seemed to have lost the inclination to vindicate their own rights.

Pharaoh despised Moses and Aaron. The Magicians defied them.—They themselves were ready to sink under the difficulty and danger of the enterprise. But, under Divine direction, they attempt, they proceed, they prosper, and they overcome. Two individuals, without any attendants, invade Egypt, having only a rod in their hands; but this simple instrument, under Divine direction, became the means of chastising the land with nine successive and severe plagues; and a learned Author[x] has shown that the means by which the Divine power was thus displayed, were adapted in a peculiar manner to local circumstances, as well as to the overcoming of local prejudice. Then, they led out of Egypt, six hundred thousand men fit to bear arms, with a corresponding number of females, besides old men and children, and a mixed multitude, which went up with them; and flocks, and herds, and very much cattle.

The last calamity inflicted upon the Egyptians was calculated to appal the stoutest heart[k]: "For it came to pass that at midnight, the Lord smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, from the first born of Pharaoh that sat upon his throne, to the first born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first born of cattle."

[x] Bryant.

Pharaoh is supposed to be the Egyptian name for king; which was continued till the commencement of the Grecian monarchy, after which the kings were called Ptolomies.

And the children of Israel borrowed of the Egyptians, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and they lent unto them such things as they required. They were willing now to give up their principle treasure, to induce them to depart.

Some persons have been disposed to consider the conduct of the Israelites, in borrowing of the Egyptians, as a species of deception and fraud, totally incompatible with the perfections of the Divine nature; and have sought to make it an occasion of calling in question the authority of the Mosaic history. This has been for want of distinguishing the genius of the Mosaical dispensation from that of the gospel. The former required an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; it was a system of retribution, a vindicatory code. It authorised full restitution for injury committed. And no one can say, it was not founded on the strictest justice and equity.

The Lord giving the Israelites favour in the sight of the Egyptians, to induce them to part

with their treasure, was consistent with the tenour of the law which he enacted, and promoted the fulfilment of it. The precepts of which it consisted, constituted a standard for regulating the actions of men. This was the height of the legal dispensation; it did not possess power, more than the penal code of any country, to change the vile affections, or amend the dispositions of men's minds; but only restrained their conduct. It was reserved for the gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation, to purify the fountain of the heart; to impart new desires and affections, whereby men would be enabled to overcome evil with that which is good; to love their enemies, to do good to them that hated them, and to grow up in that heavenly disposition, which our blessed Lord inculcated by his example, when he prayed for his bitterest enemies: "Father, forgive them! they know not what they do."

To expect that a people who had but just emerged from the lowest degree of mental degradation, and the grossest superstition, should be prepared to receive the most sublime and spiritual ideas, would be as irrational and absurd, as to suppose a person who had been confined in a dark dungeon, could bear to be immediately brought into the splendour of the meridian sun.

An all-wise Providence doth not act as an unskilful workman, but adapts his dispensations to the capacities of his creatures.

The apostle Paul compares the law to a schoolmaster, to instruct the world in its infant state. And a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness, does not expect from infancy, the perception or the understanding of maturer age. But now, as the God of Israel was about to distinguish them, by special marks of his favour, they must carefully distinguish themselves, by a punctual observance of his commands.

It is satisfactory as well as useful, to observe the nature, the occasion, and the design of sacred institutions.

The ordinance of the passover, owes its celebration to an event of considerable importance, in the history of mankind, and its abrogation to a still greater.—Its institution commemorates the destruction of all the first born in the land of Egypt, and the redemption of Israel, Its abolition marks that memorable era, the death of the son of God, and the redemption of a lost world by the shedding of his precious blood.—It is therefore not to be wondered at, if, in an ordinance which was intended to expire in the sacrifice of the great Lamb of atonement, "slain from the foundation of the world," its Divine Au-

thor should have thought proper to enjoin many particulars, which figuratively and symbolically pointed out good things to come; as well as literally expressed good things that were present.

[k]The feast was prepared by the removal of all leaven, the emblem of malice and wickedness; and eaten with unleavened bread, the emblem of sincerity and truth. The sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation were many, because they were imperfect. The sacrifice of the gospel is one, because, once offered, it for ever perfects them that are sanctified by it.

It is repeatedly remarked, that the prediction relating to the deliverance of this people, was fulfilled to a single day: "And it came to pass at the end of the 430 years, even the self same day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out of the land of Egypt." In this sum of 430 years, Moses reckoned all the pilgrimages of Abraham and his posterity, from his first leaving his kindred and his father's house in Mesopotamia, down to their triumphant exit from Egypt, and their setting out on the conquest of Canaan, whose iniquity, though not so before, was now full.

The whole number which accompanied Jacob from Canaan, when driven thence by famine, himself included, was sixty-six; which, added

to the family of Joseph already in Egypt, consisting of himself and Asenath, the daughter of the priest of On, adopted by marriage into the family of Abraham, and their two sons, the amount is seventy.

In a little more than 200 years, when they left that country, they were increased to the amazing number of 600,000 men, of military age; without reckoning females, children of both sexes under twenty, and old men of sixty and upwards; for that was the age of superannuation among this people.

Men, with their usual haste and ignorance, would have been for conducting this mighty army directly to Canaan. And no doubt the same Almighty arm which had thus effected their liberty, could have led them straight on to conquest. But, contemplating the history of the Divine conduct, as ordering and governing the affairs of men, we find it composed of Providential interpositions, as well as of human exertions. Not all miracle; *that* were to encourage indolence and stupidity in rational beings, formed after the image of God, and to reduce men to mere passive clods of earth; nor all, on the other hand, the effect of human skill, industry, and diligence; *that* were to resign the government of the world to the frail and foolish; *that* were to weaken the

power of religion, which is the life, the joy, the guide, the *supporter* of the universe.

But we discover Divine interposition to a certain degree, sufficient to inspire a reasonable confidence in and dependence upon, our great Creator, for the success of our exertions, when we have brought forth, and exercised those intellectual powers and faculties, which he hath bestowed upon us for this very purpose.

The passage of perhaps four millions of people, with their immense possessions of flocks, and herds, and other property from Egypt to Canaan, will appear one of those singular phænomena in history which no principles of human conduct, no natural, and ordinary concurrence of events can explain; and which must finally be resolved into a Wisdom and Power, preternatural and divine. Accordingly we find Providence taking immediately the charge of them, but not in the usual way; not by forming a regular discipline, and raising up commanders and magistrates of unusual address and ability; but declaring by sensible tokens: "I am the leader and commander of my people."

It is evident, God intended to form the courage of this people in the wilderness, before he tried it upon those nations which they were intended to subdue. Nay, further, it was His de-

sign to settle their whole civil and religious polity, while they were yet in an erratic state; that, when they came to Canaan, they might be prepared to execute the laws which they had already received. Instead then of marching them northward in the direction of Canaan, their course is bent eastward to the great wilderness, which bounds Egypt, and Arabia Petrea; God himself leading the way, in a most wonderful display of his glorious power and presence, described in these words: "And the Lord went before them, by day, in a pillar of a cloud; and by night, in a pillar of fire, to give them light."

CHAPTER XIX.

MOSES.

THE gracious interpositions of Jehovah on behalf of his chosen people, have this peculiar recommendation to our attention, as they have had to that people's grateful observation and acknowledgment, that they were not in the usual course of things: they were the fruits of the constant unremitting care of a special Providence; they were the suspension, or the alteration, of the established laws of nature: they were the operation of a mighty hand, and of an outstretched arm, sensibly controlling the winds, the waves, and the clouds, and subduing the most ungovernable elements to his purpose.

In vain had Israel, by a series of miracles unparalleled in the annals of mankind, been rescued from Egyptian oppression, had not the same Almighty arm which delivered them at first, continued to protect and support them. The strength of Egypt, broken as it was, had been sufficient to force them back.—The wilderness itself had

been destructive to them without a foe. But how soon are the greatest deliverances forgotten, and the most awful appearances familiarized to the mind! The very first threatening of danger, effaces from the memory of the Israelites, all impression of the powerful wonders which had just passed before them; and eclipses the glory of that cloud which, at that very instant, presented itself and overshadowed their heads. But let not self-flattery impose upon us, as if we were more faithful and obedient than they. It is the mere deception of vanity and self-love, to suppose that if one were to rise from the dead we could be persuaded; that if we saw Christ teach in our streets, we would forsake all to follow him.

The man whom the usual appearances of nature do not move, would soon become insensible to more uncommon phænomena. For extraordinary things frequently repeated, are extraordinary no longer; and consequently soon lose their force. If the daily miracles of God's mercy and loving kindness, fail to convince men; what reason is there to hope, the mere exertions of power would produce a happier effect? "If men hear not Moses, and the prophets; neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Is it not notorious that Christ's personal

ministrations were slighted, his miracles vilified, his character traduced?

All the great interests of Moses, were embarked with those of the Commonwealth of Israel. He had made a sacrifice unspeakably greater than that of any individual in the congregation. If there was danger from the pursuing host of Pharaoh, his share, most assuredly, was not less than that of any other man. He had rendered himself peculiarly obnoxious to that stern, unrelenting tyrant, and must have been amongst the first victims of his resentment. But the pressing danger to Moses did not arise from Pharoah and the Egyptians, but from an intimidated, distracted multitude, who were ready to wreak their vengeance on any one who might first meet their resentment; or could be charged as the author of their misfortunes.

The composure of Moses, under such circumstances, is justly to be considered as an instance of uncommon strength of mind, and magnanimity. But why talk of magnanimity? The man who fears God, is raised above all other fear. In the confidence of faith, though he knew not yet which way Jehovah would work deliverance for Israel, he thus attempts to diffuse the hope which he felt irradiating his own soul: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of God, which he will

show you to day. For the Egyptians, whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

The powerful rod is now stretched out.—The East wind blows.—The sea retires; and a safe and easy passage is opened for Israel through the channel of the deep. This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

Moses commemorates this great deliverance, in a song, which is the most ancient piece of poetry the world is in possession of, above 3300 years old; or full 600 years before Homer, the most ancient and the best of heathen poets. But its antiquity is its slightest excellency. The general turn of it is great, the thoughts nobly simple, the style sublime, the pathos sweet, the figures natural and bold.

Unless the mind be under the regulating power of religion, it will be perpetually losing its balance, and changing its tenour. At one time, accelerated into indecent and dangerous speed through the impulse of desire, ambition, and revenge; at another time, chilled into languour or inaction, through fear, despondency, and disappointment.

The want of this balance of the soul, and the dangerous consequences of that want, are

strikingly exemplified in the history of the chosen people, which Providence, by a series of miracles, undertook to conduct from Egypt to Canaan. The deepness of the waters of the Red sea, and their miraculous separation, afford matter of triumph to day; the bitterness of the waters of Marah, cause universal discontent and dejection to morrow. But we need not recur to distant periods of history, for an example of the ruinous effects produced by inattention to religious principle. The history of every man's own experience is illustration sufficient.

From the creation, to the Exodus, or going out of Egypt, there were two thousand, five hundred and thirteen years; and a succession of twenty-four lives. When we behold that vast congregation, by such a display of Omnipotence, rescued from bondage, conducted through the Red sea; their pursuers overwhelmed in it, and their triumphing over all their enemies; we are apt to consider them as the favourites of Heaven, designed for personal honours and possessions. But the event teaches us to correct our hasty judgment, and instructs us, that not the particular interests of individuals, but the great interests of the church of God, are the objects of his care.

Of little consequence is it to obtain the possession of expected good, unless we are fitted for

the enjoyment of it. A nation of slaves was not qualified to exercise the rights, and to enjoy the privileges of citizens. Israel had no existence in Egypt but merely a natural one. They had no civil institution, no laws, no government. To have been conducted directly to Canaan in such a state, had been the reverse of a benefit.

Providence therefore thought proper to employ a series of years in the wilderness, in training the people for empire, in modelling a government suitable to their future condition; and by enacting wise laws respecting both religion and civil polity, prepared them for that exalted rank which they were to hold among the nations, that duration of power and importance, with which the salvation of the whole human race, was so closely connected[k].

During the abode of Israel in Egypt, the observance of the sabbath had been greatly neglected, if not altogether disused. The religious principle, of course, must have been much weakened. There was nothing done then, till this matter was re-established. For there can be no good government, but what is founded upon religion.

Providence therefore employed a certain method to point out the sabbath-day to Israel, and to enforce the observance of it. On that day no manna fell, but a double quantity was

given the day before.—But long disuse had so much diminished their regard for the sabbath, that a discipline of forty years, is scarcely sufficient to restore it to its ancient dignity and estimation.

"The restraints of religion are no encroachment on human liberty; the sabbath was made for man, a season of rest for his body, a season of contemplation for his mind. It was intended for his comfort as a citizen of this world, and as a candidate for a better country. Not that the great God can be honoured, by a mere cessation from the usual employments of life, for a seventh part of our time; but He is honoured and glorified, by our making such use of this season of rest, as that we may become wise, good, and happy.

Great credit is due to the sacred writers in general, and to Moses in particular, for their fidelity and integrity, in relating those circumstances of their own temper and conduct, which are the objects of censure and condemnation, as well as those which merit applause. They do both, with the same simplicity and godly sincerity. They never appear solicitous to celebrate their own praise; and if glory may redound to God, and instruction to men, they publish their own shame. What greater proof need we, that these holy men delivered not their testimony ac-

cording to the will of man, nor in the spirit of the world; but "spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?" This candour of theirs, is no slender argument for the credibility of the scripture history.

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were on the face of the earth." Nevertheless he loses temper, and speaks unadvisedly with his lips, when the people chide with him for want of water; "Hear now ye rebels! must we fetch you water out of this rock"? He takes glory to himself, instead of ascribing it to God: "Must we fetch you water"? He presumtuously exceeds his commission. He lifts up his hand and "smites the rock twice" with his rod; whereas he was commanded only to speak to it before the eyes of the people.

This account may be handed to remind us that frailty and imperfection enter into every human character. Moses fails on the side of his greatest excellency; is found weak where he seemed most strong.—In extenuation of his conduct, we may be allowed to plead, Who but Moses, entrusted with so much power, would have abused it so little? considering also the many provocations he had met with from a people as irritable and difficult to please, as if they had never known adver-

sity, but had just issued from the lap of ease and indulgence.

If Moses lost an inheritance in an earthly Canaan, for neglecting to give glory to God in one instance; tremble to think of being eternally excluded from an inheritance with the saints in light, for want of glorifying Him here on earth. But, one offence, though it may provoke the anger, and call down the chastisement of a holy God, breaks not off all intercourse, and for ever, between him and a good man. With the firmness of a wise and just father, He denounces the punishment, and inflicts it. Nevertheless, with the tenderness and love of a gracious and relenting parent, He carries on the correspondence; and even admits the penitent and submissive child, to closer intimacy, and familiarity more endearing.

Under the weight of awful displeasure, Moses did not, like sullen Cain, complain that his punishment was greater than he could bear; he sinks not into dejection; he replies not in resentment. Though well assured he is not to be honoured with the conducting of Israel into the promised land, he does not withdraw himself from any particular of duty, relaxes not his diligence, nor cools in zeal; he labours to the last to do what he can, though he is not permitted to do what he

would. He goes before Israel to the land of Canaan, though access into it, is denied unto himself. This, as much as any thing, in his situation, marks his character, and evinces the greatness of his soul.

And now, as we are advancing to the foot of mount Sinai, to observe one of the most notable dispensations of Providence upon record, let us pause;—and, if we advert to the several circumstances of the wonderful piece of history, at which we have glanced, we shall acknowledge that it presents to the mind a series of the greatest miracles, which the hand of Omnipotence ever wrought on behalf of any nation. It is not therefore to be wondered at, if the enemies of revelation have endeavoured to sully their lustre, and impeach their credibility[k].

It has been already observed, that miracles cease to appear to be such, when, by repetition, they become familiarized to our view. Can there be a more marvellous display of Omnipotence, and Superintending Goodness, than that which is presented to our view every day, on beholding what we call, the rising of the sun? We saw it depart the last evening, to the other side of the world; we find it brought back to this in the morning: Wonderful as this is, we have so often seen it, that it has ceased to excite our astonishment.

But when, in any instance, a departure from the laws of nature is observable, it demonstrates that, by some means, matter may vary from its usual course. Whether we shall suppose the variation to be occasioned, by the suspension of some influence which had given it a particular direction, or by some new application which diverted its tendency and operation, it equally refers to the necessity of power being almost invariably applied, to keep it, in the general, to one undeviating course. Aberrations, then, strikingly evince the occasion there is for a continual application of Almighty power, as well as of superintending goodness. May we not now ask, What can be more miraculous than keeping up, through ages, the order of the universe unimpared, which, it has been manifested, may be varied?

[k] The bountiful hand which fed the seed of Abraham, immediately from the clouds, for forty years together, feeds us through a process only a little longer, by compounding the qualities of earth, air, and water. While we adore the Providential care which fed Israel by streams from the rock, let us acknowledge His bounty in keeping our rivers ever flowing, our fountains constantly supplied, and the clouds of our atmosphere, in their season, always impregnated with the rain and the dew.

God, rich in mercy, slow to anger, and of great loving kindness, had graciously forgiven the murmuring at Horeb, and extracted water from the rock for his people. But when this wo is past, then another overtakes them: then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. This transaction, so simply recorded, is mentioned again in Deuteronomy, with many circumstances of aggravation, that account for the provocation which a holy and righteous God himself, expresses on the occasion: "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of the land of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee; even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary, and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thy enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven: thou shalt not forget it."

Amalek, the father of this nation, as we learn from Genesis xxxvi, 12, was grandso to Esau, and son to Eliphas by a concubine named Timna. The Amalekites possessed a large tract of territory, extending from the confines of Idumea unto

the eastern shore of the red sea. The paternal relation which subsisted between the posterity of Jacob and of Amalek, might encourage Israel to pass on their way, with greater confidence. But treacherous Amalek, basely and cruelly seizes the moment of Israel's languor and debility, to crush those, for whose deliverance and protection, Jehovah had made bare his holy arm in the sight of the nations. This, without any provocation, was an impious attempt to defeat the plan of Divine Providence. His not fearing God who had so recently displayed his marvellous power, was such an aggravation of the crime, as to entail upon his posterity utter destruction.

On this occasion Israel is commanded to fight under Joshua; and Moses has recourse unto the power of God, typified by the rod in his hand. When this was held up, Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. It was hereby intended that the deliverance which was to be wrought for Israel, though not wholly independent of the use of means, should evidently appear to depend upon Providential interposition. As it was the first battle which Israel was called to fight, it was designed to be a model for all that should follow; of assured success to them, and victory over all their enemies, provided they adhered to Divine direction.

Israel conquered. But it was impossible for them to mistake the means by which they were successful. The hand of the Lord, and his holy arm, had gotten them the victory. The altar which was built upon the occasion had inscribed upon it, Jehovah Nissi: "The Lord my banner."

The posterity of Abraham, according to the promise, is now become a great nation. But what are multitudes without government! and what government is a blessing without law! Happiness consists not in having possessions, but in being fitted to enjoy them. The constitution of other states is a work of time, is the result of experience, arrives at maturity by degrees. Laws and restrictions, encouragements and restraints, are suggested by events. But when the great Jehovah condescends to become a legislator, the utmost extent of possibility is open to his view; provision is made, from the beginning, for every case that can happen. The rule of His government is laid down at once, and the civil and religious constitution of that nation over which he chose to preside, is established by a Wisdom that cannot err.

It is calculated, that the law was delivered exactly on the fiftieth day after the celebration of the feast of the Passover. In commemoration of it, the Jewish feast of Pentecost was ever after

observed; and it was rendered illustrious in the annals of the christian church, by a new dispensation, not of terror, but of grace, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles of our Lord, and the miraculous gift of tongues.

Sinai, the scene of the splendid exhibition to the children of Israel, is the highest eminence of a vast ridge of mountains, running from east to west through Arabia Petræa, on the way from the north-east coast of the Red Sea to Palestine. The adjacent eminence is called Horeb, rendered illustrious by the miracle of the water issuing from the rock; this, forming part of the same chain of mountains, they are often put the one for the other; and the adjacent desert country, is called indifferently the wilderness of Horeb, or the wilderness of Sinai. Moses was first called up to the mountain alone, and sent back to the people with repeated messages full of tenderness and love. B. C. 1491.

Preparation was made for the tremendous appearance of the glory of the Lord, by the most gracious and reiterated assurances of favour and protection, conveyed in this sublime, but endearing language: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself; now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep

my covenant, then ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

Moses takes up again this beautiful figure, in his recapitulation of the wonderful dealings of Providence with this chosen family; but delineates it with greater strength and variety of colouring: "the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the Lot of his inheritance, He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about; He instructed him; He kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields, and He made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock."

The promise which follows, in the 6th verse, is wonderfully calculated to inspire ideas of dignity and importance: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." These are the words which Moses is commanded to rehearse in the ears of all the people. On the delivering this message, they, as one man, reply: "All that the Lord hath spoken, that we will do;" which answer, Moses reports to his dread Em-

ployer. Upon this Moses is informed that God intended, on the third day from that time, to manifest Himself to all the people, as the leader and ruler of that vast army; and as the employer and patron of Moses his prophet, in a manner that should leave no doubt by whose authority he acted.

And the Lord said unto Moses: "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe for ever! And thou shalt set bounds to the people round about; saying, take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, nor touch the border of it; for whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death." A command was then given to them to employ themselves that day, and the next, in solemn preparation for this august visit. As a token of obedience, and indication of inward purity, they are directed to wash their clothes; to abstain themselves from whatever might defile the body, or the mind; and even to deny themselves those lawful gratifications which might have a tendency to divert their attention[k].

"And Moses sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes." "And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud, on

the mount; and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp, to meet with God." "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." And the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount, and said: "Charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also which come near unto the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them."

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

[c] THE spreading of corruption after the deluge, is not to be assigned to ignorance of religion, but to religion directed to wrong objects and pursuits.

While men retained the knowledge of the true God, they cared not to glorify Him by the practice of virtue and holiness; "neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations." *Rom.* i. 21.

Artful men, through pride and wantonness, indulging idle conceits, involved their own understandings, and those of others, in the thickest clouds of error and delusion. It is probable, they represented the sun, moon, and stars, as illustrious intelligences, which, being so eminently exalted, must have the highest interest in the favour of God, the direction of human affairs, and the distribution of temporal blessings. Thus the people might be driven, enticed, and drawn in, to worship them; see *Deut.* iv. 19; for the attri-

butes of supposed deities and benefactors of mankind, being feigned purely by human imagination, they would naturally be represented by men who had their own interests and lusts to serve, in such a manner as best suited the corrupt taste and inclinations of those who were disposed to follow them. And by this method, men would be led to believe they might be religious; gain health, long life, and fruitful seasons; plenty and prosperity, without the practice of holiness and virtue.

We may add to this, that cunning men, who knew how to make an advantage of the foibles of mankind, introduced into their minds notions of fate, destiny, fortune, chance, necessity, with many other delusions. Hence arose professors of the vilest arts, pretending to look into futurity, to gratify the malicious desires of those who consulted them, by professing to procure bad luck to others. *Deut.* xviii. 10. Of this class were diviners, observers of times, enchanters, witches, or such as pretend to work upon the mind or body for evil purposes, by herbs or potions, charmers, consulters with a pretended familiar spirit, wizards, necromancers. And so far were the people infatuated, that they made their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, under a notion of a sacrifice to their idols; probably to gain their blessing upon their children, and

to make them healthy and fortunate. *Deut.* xii. 31. xviii. 10. Thus their hope and trust was diverted from the Divine Being and his Providence, to vain idols, and the vilest impostors[e].

In Abraham's time, the delusions of idolatry were so strong, that all nations seem to have run into it, at once, and alike; and such was the infatuating nature of the infection, that there was no rational prospect of reformation, by arguments or reasoning, when the most dreadful judgments were no longer regarded. [e] The knowledge and worship of the one living and true God, the great principle of moral goodness, and of public and private happiness, might have been lost in the earth, had not the gracious Father of the universe, instead of destroying all nations, as at the deluge, been pleased to introduce a new and noble plan, which, under several variations and improvements, was to reach to the end of time. The scheme was to choose and adopt one family, afterward to be formed into a nation, instructed in religious knowledge by God himself, and favoured with such extraordinary privileges and honours, above all the nations of the earth, as were, in their own nature, adapted to engage this people by the most rational motives, to adhere to God and to his worship. At the same time, to prevent their being infected with the

idolatries and vices of the rest of the world, as they certainly would have been, had they mingled with them, they were to be distinguished and separated from all other people, by their diet, their dress, and divers civil and religious rites, and observances. Thus they were kept together in a body, and hindered from mixing with, or being corrupted by their idolatrous neighbours; and, in every respect, were fitted to be an example and instruction to them, under the various dispensations wherewith they were visited. And further, their laws and institutions being originally recorded in books, would more certainly be preserved and known in all future ages and generations.

Thus Divine wisdom and goodness, provided a storehouse of religious knowledge, a whole nation of priests, *Exod.* xix. 6. a school of instruction and wisdom for all the world. They were to be as leaven, which, in process of time, was to leaven the whole lump or mass of mankind.

Abraham, a person of the most eminent piety and virtue, was chosen to be the father and head of this nation; that, as in this station he would always be held in great veneration among them, they might contemplate in him, an illustrious pattern of godliness. Abraham was required to cast himself wholly upon God's providence, by

removing, at his command, from his own kindred and country, to an unknown, distant land.

In this strange land, he wandered about as long as he lived; but this was the means of diffusing, among other people, the leaven of his example and sentiments; for God was with him every where. Thus he took him under his immediate care and protection. God appeared to him, and conversed with him frequently and familiarly, and gave him repeated assurances that He would make of him a great nation, and give to his posterity the whole land of Canaan. But he was not to have a son, till the birth of that son was manifestly the miraculous effect of Divine power; thereby insuring the performance of the promise, that in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed[e].

What could be more likely to excite duty, affection, and confidence, towards God? The same encouragements, blessings, and promises, are repeated to Isaac, and afterwards to Jacob. But it may be said, notwithstanding all this, Jacob's was a wicked family; his sons had stained it with adulteries, with incest, and with murder. Who then can arraign Divine Justice in permitting their posterity to be enslaved; when we have seen, for the impiety of Ham to his father, his descen-

dant was cursed, in becoming a servant of servants?

An Omniscient Judge does not suffer the wicked to go unpunished, any more than he permits their wickedness to annihilate his faithfulness, or reverse his judgment. The promise was sure to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.

Hasty and superficial persons, may deem the forty years during which Moses was a shepherd in the land of Midian, an inglorious waste of his extraordinary talents; but let us look at the mighty consequences which were involved, in this part of the arrangement of the plan of Divine Wisdom.

We have already observed, that the calm retirement of a shepherd's life, was favourable to the production of the most important history in the world. During this protracted period, the descendants of Jacob were expiating their crimes, by the sufferings inflicted upon them in Egypt; and then there arose a king who knew not Joseph; but whose heart was so hardened, that he rendered himself a fit subject of Almighty displeasure and chastisement. Not till they had been under this grievous affliction 215 years, had they grown numerous enough to become a distinct nation. Not until then, did Aaron come

from Egypt to Midian in quest of Moses; and, not until he was on his way thither, did God appear unto Moses in the flame of fire in a bush, encouraging him in this language: "Behold, Aaron thy brother cometh forth to meet thee!"

What a wonderful concurrence of circumstances is here presented to our view, all combining to mature and unfold, the operations of the Divine plan and counsel. Here is an apparatus worthy of Him who seeth the end, from the beginning. Not till now, did God set himself at the head of them as their king. And in a country much esteemed for learning and arts, whither men of genius and curiosity resorted from all other parts;—upon this stage, so proper, because so public, God, as the King of Israel, combated the king of Egypt, and his fictitious gods; and displayed His infinitely superior power both to destroy, and to save.[e]

For this end, no doubt, the Divine Wisdom permitted, on this special occasion, Pharaoh's magicians to imitate some of the miracles which Moses wrought, in order to demonstrate more clearly his Omnipotence; to convince both Egyptians and Israelites, of the vanity of such arts. It was in effect a challenge to these enchanters to bring forth their power in the highest degree, that He might confound and break it to pieces;

and thereby manifest, in the sight of the nations, the superiority and strength of his marvellous arm. For this purpose, the first display of it before Pharaoh, was attended with three miracles; for when Aaron's rod which had become a serpent, had swallowed up all the rods of the magicians, which also had become serpents, on taking it up, it became a simple rod again in his hand; hereby manifesting the omnipotence of His power who killeth, and also maketh alive. For the same reason, an extraordinary power might be permitted to evil spirits, to possess the bodies of men, that our Saviour's dominion over the devil and his angels, might be more evidently shown.

In what has been recapitulated, we have seen how the children of Israel, were prepared for the reception of a civil, as well as a religious constitution of government, which, though adapted with wonderful exactness to the infant state of the church and family of God, was, in itself, but a shadow of good things to come, which, in the fulness of time, would be made manifest in the christian dispensation.

When we consider that the patriarchs had not the advantages either of the dispensation of the Law, or of the Gospel; that, in those times, there were not any historians, through which they might be instructed by the experience of others; that

they were nevertheless intended to counteract the contagion of idolatry, by bearing testimony to all nations of the existence of one Supreme Being, the Creator and Preserver of the world, the only proper object of adoration; who does not see the necessity there was, for an extraordinary communication to them of the knowledge of his holiness, justice, mercy, power, and wisdom? For this purpose, Almighty Goodness gave to the family which he had selected from an idolatrous world, sensible and extraordinary proofs of his existence and attributes, demonstrated through the miraculous medium of personal representations, intended to be obvious to the outward senses.

Thus the Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre, when he sat in his tent door, in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes, and looked, and lo! three men stood by him. To obviate every idea of this being any illusion of the brain, Moses has given us a minute detail of attendant circumstances, wherein corporeal existence is manifested by eating, drinking, and other bodily exertions, also in going towards Sodom, where they smote the men at the door of Lot's house with blindness.

We read of the appearance of angels, not only in the times of the patriarchs, but in those of the judges, and of the prophets. And the manner of

their ministration, was confirmed in the example of our blessed Lord, after his resurrection, by the instances of his not only resuming corporeal existence, but also of his instantaneously quitting it. When he sat at meat with the two disciples who had gone to Emmaus, "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave it to them; and their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and He vanished out of their sight." Again, when he appeared to the eleven, and afterward to the twelve disciples, and came and stood in the midst, it is expressly stated that the doors were shut; as if to demonstrate that he instantaneously resumed the body; and that it was no illusion, is manifest by his saying to Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger, and thrust it into my side."—Thus every varied dispensation of Almighty Goodness, in the government of his chosen people, and in the formation of his church, was attended with undeniable attestation of its being of Divine appointment.

[h] To fix the certainty of revelation, and establish religion upon a firm foundation, it pleased God to give two sorts of proof, which were suited to the capacities of the most simple, and superior to the subtilties of the incredulous, and which visibly bore the character of Omnipotence.

These two sorts of proofs were miracles and prophecies. The miracles were exposed to view in the most plain, public, and notorious manner; multiplied, diversified, long foretold, and expected, continuing for a long series of days, and some for years. The family of Noah could not forget the destruction of the world by a deluge, and the miraculous manner in which they were saved by the ark. Fire came down from heaven upon the unrighteous cities. The whole kingdom of Egypt was punished, at different times, by ten plagues. The sea opened a passage to the Israelites, and closed to overwhelm Pharaoh and his army.

The people of Israel were fed with manna forty years, having water given them from the flinty rock; they were covered with a cloud from the heat of the day, and enlightened by night with a pillar of fire. Their clothes and their shoes were not worn out in so long a journey.—Thus they were formed to be a peculiar people, separated from all other nations, by distinct laws and customs; directed and governed in a manner entirely singular; exposed as a spectacle to the rest of the world, by the innumerable wonders which God wrought among them, whether with a view to fix them in the promised land, or to bring them back to it, when driven out.

He did not think it sufficient to guide them, like other people, by a general and common Providence; but Himself became their head, legislator, and king.—And it was intended that their departure out of Egypt, their wandering in the desert, their entrance into the land of promise, their wars and conquests, their long captivity in Babylon, their return to their own country; in a word, that all the different changes which befel them, should be a type and figure of what should be experienced by the members of his militant church [h].

The patriarchal dispensation, may be compared to the first stone of the foundation for the christian church. The birth of Isaac, like that of Jesus Christ, was predicted by an Angel, and was also preternatural. He was the son and heir of his father, yet he submitted to be bound, in order to be offered up a sacrifice unto God. He was a man of contemplation and peace; he overcame through patience and suffering, as was evidenced in his meekly surrendering his right to the wells he had digged.

But the history of Joseph, abounds the most with circumstances, of resemblance to Jesus Christ. The bare representation of them will be evident proof of this observation.

Particulars of agreement between Jesus Christ and Joseph.

JOSEPH.	JESUS CHRIST.
Is hated of his brethren;	Is hated of the Jews.
	He came to his own, but they received him not;
For accusing them of some great crime;	For reproving them for their sins;
For being affectionately beloved by his father;	For declaring himself to be the Son of God; and saying, that God himself called him his well beloved Son;
For foretelling his future glory.	For foretelling that they should see him sitting at the right hand of God.
He is sent by his father, to his brethren at a distance.	He is sent by God his Father, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
His brethren conspire against his life.	The Jews form a design of putting him to death.
He is sold for twenty pieces of silver.	He is sold for thirty pieces of silver.

JOSEPH.	JESUS CHRIST.
He is given up into the hands of strangers by his own brethren.	He is delivered up to the Romans by the Jews.
He is condemned by Potiphar without any one speaking in his behalf.	He is condemned, and no one speaks in his defence.
He suffers in silence.	He suffers all kinds of injuries and punishments without complaining.
Placed between two criminals, he foretels the advancement of one and the approaching death of the other.	Placed between two thieves, he foretels the one that he should go into Paradise, and lets the other die impenitent.
He arrives at glory by sufferings and humiliation.	It behooved that Christ should suffer, and thus enter into glory.
He is set over the house of Pharoah, and over all Egypt.	He is made head of the Church, and every creature is made subject to him.

JOSEPH.	JESUS CHRIST.
Pharaoh alone is above him.	He is above every creature; but, as man, was subject to God.
He was called the Saviour of the world.	The name of Jesus signifies a Saviour; and is indeed the only one by which we can be saved.
All bend the knee before him.	Every creature must bow at the name of Jesus.
The famine is in all lands; there is no bread but in Egypt, where Joseph governs.	Poverty and error are universal; truth and grace are found only in the church where Jesus Christ reigns.
All the neighbouring people come to Egypt to buy corn, that their lives may be saved.	All nations are admitted into the Church to obtain salvation.
Joseph's brethren come to him, own him, fall down before him, and are fixed in Egypt.	The Jews will one day return to Jesus Christ, own him, worship him, and will enter into the Church.

[h] Could mere chance have possibly thrown together so many resembling circumstances; so different, and at the same time so natural? Rollin asserts, he should as soon say, that a finished portrait was the effect of mere chance. It is plain that an intelligent hand did apply all these tracings, to make a perfect picture; and that the design of Omniscience, in joining together so many singular circumstances in the life of Joseph, was to describe the principal lines in that of his Son. We should therefore know the history of Joseph only by halves, if we stopped at the bare surface, without informing ourselves of the hidden and mysterious sense, wherein the most essential part of it consists; as Jesus Christ is the end of the law, and of all the Scriptures[h].

After such a description as this, is it not strange, that any persons should entertain doubts of Providential interposition, in the formation and control of character; persons who consider the idea of types and figures, to have no better origin than a childish indulgence of the imagination, to make likenesses of things that have no relation to each other. Amidst the innumerable diversifications of situation and character, which two thousand years must have produced, they say, it would have been incredible not to have found

persons, whose lives have been distinguished by incidents which bear some resemblance to those recorded in the history of Jesus; they say it would have been more extraordinary, than the circumstances of similarity which the biography of Joseph represents.

We are not disposed to deny, that there have been persons who have attempted to resolve great part of the Scriptures into types and figures, the weakness of whose intellect, and disordered perception, may be compared to the jaundiced eye, to which all objects have the same complexion. But we should consider those wilfully blind, who do not admit the resemblance of the Mosaic, to the Christian lawgiver, as described by Moses: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things;" and they may take a view, if they please, of the analogy between Moses and Christ, as it is drawn in the 24th chapter of this work.

We shall not dismiss the history of Joseph, without remarking that the place which his sufferings have in the sacred record, is of singular importance. Had we not been acquainted with remarkable events and jeopardies, to which some individuals amongst mankind have been exposed, we should have been at a loss to account for some of the extraordinary circumstances attending the

mission of Jesus: "Who verily took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest; For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. *Heb.* ii. 16, 17, *and* iv. 15.

CHAPTER XXI.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING JACOB AND ESAU, AND THE SONS OF JACOB.

WE have already seen that Abraham predicted the state and condition of his posterity by Ishmael, who was the son of the bond woman. The prophecies relative to Isaac, the son of the free woman, are much more numerous; but we shall only select some of those which have reference to these latter ages.

It was promised to Abraham before Ishmael or any son was born to him.

"*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"

But after the birth of Ishmael and Isaac, the promise was limited to Isaac: "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called." *Gen.* xxi. 12. And accordingly, to Isaac was the promise repeated:

"*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*" Gen. xxvi. 4.

The Saviour of the world was therefore not to come of the family of Ishmael, but of the family of Isaac; which is an argument for the

truth of the Christian religion, in preference to the Mahometan, drawn from a prophecy made 2000 years before Christ; and many more before Mahomet was born.

The land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and his seed, four hundred years before they took possession of it. *Gen.* xv. It was promised again, to Isaac:

"*For unto thee and to thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto thy father Abraham.*" Gen. xxvi. 3.

Now it is very well known, that it was not until after the death of Moses, who wrote these things, that the Israelites got possession of the land under Joshua. They remained in possession of it several ages in pursuance of these prophecies; and afterwards, when for their sins and iniquities they were to be removed from it, their removal also was foretold; both the carrying away of the ten tribes, and the captivity of the two remaining tribes, for seventy years; and likewise their final captivity, and dispersion into all nations:

It was foretold that the families of Esau, and Jacob should grow up into two different people and nations:

"*Two nations dost thou bear, and two manner of people shall be separated from thee.*"

The Edomites were the offspring of Esau, as the Israelites were of Jacob; and who but the Author and Giver of life could foresee, that two children, unborn, would multiply into two nations?

Jacob had twelve sons, and their descendants all united, and incorporated into one nation. And what an overruling Providence it was, that two nations should arise from the two sons only, of Isaac!—But they were not only to grow up into two nations, but into two very different nations.—And have not the Edomites and the Israelites, been all along two very different peoples in their manners, and customs, and religions; which made them perpetually to be at variance with one another? The children struggle together before their birth, which was a token of their future disagreement.

The religion of the Jews is very well known; but whatever the Edomites were at the first, in process of time, they became Idolaters. And Amaziah king of Judah, after he had overthrown the Edomites, 2 *Chron.* xxv. 14, brought their gods, "and set them up to be his gods;" which was strangely absurd, as the prophet remonstrates: "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?" *verse* 15. Upon

these religious differences, and other accounts, there was a continual grudge and enmity between the two nations. The king of Edom would not suffer the Israelites, on their return out of Egypt, so much as to pass through his territories. And the history of the Edomites afterwards, is little more than the history of their wars with the Jews.

David and his captains made an entire conquest of the Edomites, *2 Sam.* viii. 14, and all they of Edom became David's servants. In this state of servitude, they continued about 150 years, governed by viceroys appointed by the kings of Judah. But in the days of Jehoram they revolted, and made a king over themselves. Afterwards, Amaziah king of Judah subdued and carried them into captivity. Judas Maccabeus attacked and defeated them many times with great slaughter. Lastly, his nephew Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, reduced them to the necessity of embracing the Jewish religion; whereupon they submitted to be circumcised, and even afterwards were incorporated into the Jewish church and nation.

In all spiritual gifts the younger was to be greatly superior, and to be the happy instrument of conveying the blessing to all nations:

"*In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"

And hitherto are to be referred, in their full force, those expressions: "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee; and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Jacob was a man of more religion, and believed the Divine promises more, than Esau. The posterity of Jacob likewise preserved the true religion, and the worship of one God, while the Edomites were sunk in idolatry. And of the seed of Jacob, was born the Saviour of the world. This was the peculiar privilege and advantage of Jacob, to be the happy instrument of conveying these spiritual blessings to all nations. This was his greatest superiority over Esau; and in this sense the Apostle Paul understands and applies the prophecy: "The elder shall serve the younger." *Rom.* ix. 12. Thus Christ, the Saviour of the world, was to be born of some one family, and we have seen Jacob's was preferred to Esau's. When the Gentiles were converted to Christianity, the prophecy was fulfilled literally: "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee."

The nation of the Edomites were, at several times, conquered by, and made tributary to the Jews; but never the nation of the Jews, to the Edomites; and the Jews have been the more

considerable people; more known in the world, and more famous in history. We know little of the Edomites, except that Mount Seir and the adjacent country, was at first their possession, which they afterwards extended into Arabia, and into the southern parts of Judea. But wherever they were situate, we find, in temporal advantages, they were little inferior to the Israelites. And this agrees with the prediction; for it was said to Jacob: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." And much the same is said to Esau: "Behold! thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;" accordingly Esau had "cattle, and beasts, and substance," in abundance.

But what is the nation now? they were swallowed up and lost, partly among the Nabathæan Arabs, and partly among the Jews; and the name was abolished and disused about the end of the first century after Christ. Thus were they rewarded for insulting and oppressing their brethren, the Jews; and hereby other prophecies were fulfilled; of *Jeremiah* xlix. 7. and of *Ezekiel*, xxv. 12, &c. of *Joel* iii. 19. *Amos*, i. 3. and *Obadiah*. And at this day we see the Jews subsisting as a distinct people, when Edom is no more; agreeably to the words of Obadiah: "For thy violence

against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever;" *verse* 10. and again: "There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau, for the Lord hath spoken it." *Verse* 18.

Jacob, as we have seen, received a double blessing, temporal and spiritual; the promise of the land of Canaan, and the promise of the seed in which all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And Jacob, a little before his death, assigns to each of his sons, a portion in the promised land; but limits the descent of the blessed seed to the tribe of Judah; yet at the same time sketches out the character and temporal condition of all the tribes. He adopts the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, for his own; but fortels that the younger should be the greater of the two; *Gen.* xlviii. 19; and hath not the prediction been fully justified by the event? The tribe of Ephraim grew to be so numerous and powerful, that it is sometimes put for all the ten tribes of Israel.

Of Reuben it is said:

"*Unstable as water thou shalt not excel.*" Gen. xlix. 4.

And what is recorded great or excellent of the tribe of Reuben? in number and power, they were inferior to several other tribes.

Of Simeon and Levi it is said:

"*I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel;* verse 7;

And was not this eminently fulfilled in the tribe of Levi; who had no portion or inheritance of their own, but were dispersed among the other tribes? Neither had the tribe of Simeon any inheritance or property of their own; but only a portion in the midst of the tribe of Judah. *Josh.* xix. 1, 9.

According to the Jerusalem Targum, the tribe of Simeon were so straitened in their circumstances, that great numbers were necessitated to seek a subsistence among the other tribes, by teaching and instructing their children.

Of Zebulun it is said:

"*He shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and shall be for a haven of ships.*" Gen. xlix. 4.

And accordingly the tribe of Zebulun extended from the sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean, *Josh.* xix. 10, &c. where they had commodious havens for shipping. And how could Jacob have foretold the situation of any tribe, which was determined 200 years afterwards by casting lots, unless he had been directed by that Divine Spirit who disposeth of all events?

Of Benjamin it is said:

"*He shall raven as a wolf.*" Verse 27.

And was not that a fierce and warlike tribe, as appears in several instances; and particularly in the case of the Levite's wife; *Judg.* xxii; when they alone waged war against all the other tribes, and overcame them in two battles?

In this manner Jacob characterizes the other tribes. Each of the twelve sons of Jacob was constituted the head of a tribe:

"*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel; and this is it their father spoke to them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing, he blessed them.*" Verse 28.

To Judah particularly it was promised, that the "sceptre, or rod of the tribe, should not depart from him," nor a judge, or lawgiver from between his feet: his tribe should continue a distinct tribe, with rulers, and judges, and governors, of its own, until the coming of the Messiah. The people of Israel, after this settlement of their government, were reckoned by the tribes, but never before. The tribe of Judah made as considerable a figure as any of them. In number it was superior to the others, *Numb.* i. *and* xxvi. It had the first rank in the armies of Israel. *Numb.* ii. It marched first against the Canaanites, *Judg.* i. and upon all occasions manifested such courage as fully answered the character given of it:

"Judah is a lion's whelp, from the prey my son thou art gone up, he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; Who shall rouse him up?" Verse 9.

If the first king of Israel was of the tribe of Benjamin, the second was of the tribe of Judah; and from that time to the Babylonish captivity, Judah had not only the sceptre of a tribe, but likewise the sceptre of a kingdom. When it was promised to Judah, particularly, that the sceptre should not depart from him, it was implied that it should depart from the other tribes; and accordingly the tribe of Benjamin became a sort of appendage to the kingdom of Judah; and the other ten tribes were, after a time, carried away captive into Assyria, from whence they never returned.

The Jews also were carried captive to Babylon, but returned after seventy years. In their captivity they were still allowed to live as a distinct people, appointed feasts and fasts for themselves, and had rulers and governors of their own; as we may collect from several places in Ezra and Nehemiah. When Cyrus had issued his proclamation for the rebuilding of the temple, then rose up the chief of the fathers, saith *Esdras*, i. 5; so that they had chiefs and rulers among them. Cyrus ordered the vessels of the temple to be de-

livered to the prince of Judah; *Ezra* i. 8; so that they had then a prince of Judah. And these princes and rulers, who are often mentioned, managed their return and settlement afterwards.

It is true that after the Babylonish captivity, they were not so free a people as before, being under the dominion of the Persians, Greeks, and Romans; but still they lived as a distinct people under their own laws. The authority of their rulers and elders subsisted under these foreign masters, as it had done even while they were in Egypt. It subsisted even in our Saviour's time; for we often read of the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people.

But the sceptre was then departing, and in about forty years after it totally departed. Their city was taken; their temple was destroyed, and they themselves were either slain with the sword, or sold for slaves. And from that time to this, they have never formed one body, or society, but have been dispersed among all nations; their tribes and genealogies have been confounded; they have lived without a ruler, without a lawgiver, and without supreme authority and government in any part of the earth. This is a captivity not for seventy years only; but for more than seventeen hundred.

We have now seen the fulfilment of the prophecy, so far as it relates to the sceptre not departing from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet. We have now to consider the subsequent parts, viz. "Until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," or the obedience of the people.—"Until Shiloh come," that is, until the coming of the Messiah, as almost all interpreters, both ancient and modern, agree. For howsoever they may explain the word, and whencesoever they may derive it, the Messiah is the person plainly intended. In the Samaritan text and version, it is Pacificus, the peace-maker, and this perhaps is the best explanation of the word. For to whom can this, or any similar title, be so justly applied as to the Messiah? who is emphatically stiled, the Prince of Peace; and at whose birth was the proclamation of the heavenly host: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will towards men."

Two events are specified as forerunners of the sceptre's departing from Judah; the coming of the Messiah, and the gathering of the Gentiles to him; and these together point out with greater exactness, the precise time of the sceptre's departure. Now it is certain that before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dissolution of the Jewish Commonwealth, by the Romans, the Messiah was

not only come, but great numbers likewise of the Gentiles were converted to him.

The very same thing was predicted by our Saviour himself: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come;" *Matt.* xxiv. 14; the destruction of Jerusalem, and end of the Jewish constitution. The Jews were not to be cut off, until the Gentiles were grafted into the Church. And in fact, we find the apostles and their companions preached the gospel, in all the parts of the world then known: "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." *Rom.* x. 18. And then the end came; then an end was put to Jewish polity, in church and state.

The government of the tribe of Judah had subsisted, in some form or other, from the death of Jacob to the last destruction of Jerusalem; but then it was utterly broken and ruined; then the sceptre departed, and hath never been restored. And now, even the distinction of tribes is in a great measure lost among them; they are all called Jews, but the tribe of Judah is now so far from bearing rule, that they know not for certain which is the tribe of Judah; and all the world is witness that they exercise dominion no where, but every where live in subjection.

To conclude, this prophecy and the completion of it will furnish us with an invincible argument, not only that Messiah is come, but also that Jesus Christ is the person. For the sceptre was not to depart from Judah, until the Messiah should come; but the sceptre hath been long removed, consequently the Messiah hath been long come.

The sceptre departed at the final destruction of Jerusalem, and hath been departed seventeen centuries; and consequently the Messiah came a little before that period. Prejudice itself cannot long make any doubt concerning the person. All considerate men must say, as Simon Peter said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. *John* vi. 68, 69.

CHAPTER XXII.

MOSES AND AARON.

IN chapter the 19th, we left Moses at the burning mountain; for the Lord descended upon it in fire; and all the people beheld the smoke which ascended, as the smoke of a furnace; and the whole mount quaked greatly; the people also heard the voice of God answering Moses, but Aaron only was permitted to accompany him on the mount. Then were delivered the law of the ten commandments, and those institutions of a civil and political nature, which regarded their social and national capacity; in which may be traced the justest and most comprehensive views of human nature; the noblest and most liberal ideas of legislation; the most perfect equity, and the profoundest sagacity.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: "*Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.*" And Moses was again called up unto the Lord, and with him Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and se-

venty of the elders of Israel; but they were to worship afar off; and Moses, only, was to come near unto the Lord. "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." *Exod.* xxiv. 3.

Upon which Moses reduced to writing, the articles of the treaty between God and the people, to be recited aloud in the hearing of all concerned, previously to the solemnity of the ensuing ratification. According to the form observed on such occasions, rising up early in the morning, he builds an altar under the hill where the Divine Presence should be manifested, on one side, and twelve pillars, to represent the twelve tribes of Israel, on the other side; and, upon the altar, offers a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord.

The blood of the victims was divided into two equal parts; one half was put into basins, and it is likely was placed by the twelve pillars of stone; where, in all probability, were arranged the seventy elders; the representatives of each tribe standing by the pillars peculiar to their tribes. The other half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar on the other side; thus that which constituted the life of the sacrifice was separated.

And Moses, standing between the divided parts, having some of the blood, now denominated the blood of the covenant, or of the purifying victim, in his hands, rehearsed aloud the words of the covenant in the audience of the people; and then solemnly demanded whether they acceded to the conditions of it.

The form of abjuration, as we have before observed, was awful: "As the body of this victim is cleft asunder, as the blood of this animal is poured out, so let my body be divided, and my blood shed, if I prove unsteadfast or perfidious."

Under an engagement of this dreadful import, they consent to the conditions of the treaty, saying: "All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient." Whereupon Moses sprinkled some of the blood upon the people, in the persons of their representatives, as he had before upon the altar; expressing thereby God's acceptance of their persons, and his engagement to fulfil all that the covenant promised on His part. Being sprinkled with blood, "then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet, as it were a paved work of sapphire stones, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness.

Here is no similitude but of that which was under his feet; but a splendour which at once attracted and repelled, so that they could only describe the pavement, not the ceiling; the habitation, not the inhabitant.

Moses is to be entrusted with yet further manifestations of the Divine will, and is commanded to ascend higher. From this high elevation he is informed that he is to receive the same law in a different form: "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law and commandments, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them." A matter of so much importance was not to be trusted to the vague and varying traditions of men, but collected into a record that would be unimpaired by the revolutions of empire, or the wreck of nations. This would prevent the necessity of a frequent interposition of the Deity, which must at length have diminished its impression, had it become common and familiar.

The care of Providence in preserving this record, and transmitting it to us unaltered and unimpaired, is a perpetual miracle, which we are bound to acknowledge with wonder, and improve with gratitude. Happy is it for man, that he has not been left, for moral and religious instruction, to the traditions of men, ever changing, as the flimsy, imperfect, contradictory systems of phi-

losophy and science, falsely so called;—but that he is brought to the law, and to the testimony, to Moses, and the prophets, to the Saviour himself, and his apostles. Happy is it that every one is furnished with the same light to his feet, and lamp to his paths; and that all are taught of God, from the least to the greatest.

In the next ascent to the mount, Moses is accompanied, a certain length at least, and no doubt by Divine appointment, by Joshua his minister, on whom God began to put honour thus early, to exhalt him in the eyes of the people whom he was designed one day to command. As this absence of Moses, from the weighty duties of his charge, was to be of longer continuance than usual, the management of civil affairs, and the administration of justice, were committed, in the mean time, to Aaron and Hur, who had held up his hands when Amalek was smitten before Israel. "And the sight of the glory of the Lord, was like devouring flame on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the Children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount, and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."

During this time was shown to Moses the pattern of the structure, called the tabernacle, which was to be reared to the God of Israel;

the description of which, and of the service thereof, occupies seven chapters in the book of Exodus. As it was intended to be the shadow of good things to come, every iota and tittle are of Divine ordering and appointment; and undoubtedly were figurative of what was to be accomplished under the gospel, in the building up of the church of Christ; that is in the experience of the faithful.

All the instruments of the tabernacle were also shown to Moses, in which Jehovah presented a mode and form of worship for his people, which should surpass all the splendour displayed in the service of the false gods of the nations; together with a sacredness and dignity peculiar to itself: it was prepared to attract their senses by show, and their souls by wisdom. He was planning a tabernacle, establishing a priesthood, appointing festivals and sacrifices, whose magnificence should eclipse the glory which they had seen in Egypt.

But, strange to tell, at that very time, the Children of Israel were devising a scheme as offensive to God, as dishonourable to themselves. Their guilt begins in sinful impatience and presumption. The transition is so sudden that it seems incredible. Not many days had past since they gave the most solemn, explicit, and unreserved consent to the Divine law, the first con-

dition of which was: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" and the second: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

The particular circumstances of the Israelites in the wilderness, render their proneness to idol worship peculiarly unaccountable. The chain of miracles which accompanied their deliverance from Egypt; the scrupulous care employed, if we may use the expression, to exhibit no manner of similitude of the Deity, in Horeb, were to prevent the possibility of a pretence to use, or to transmit to posterity, any sensible representation of the invisible God.

The noise of the mighty thunderings has scarcely ceased; they have not well recovered from the terror inspired by that voice which made heaven and earth to tremble, when, as one man, they apply to Aaron: "Make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him." What shall we say of the stupidity which talked of making gods, and of following that which could not move, but as it was carried? How shall we express our abhorrence of the base ingratitude of this people?

The blessed communion in the mount was suddenly broken off, because of the dreadful scene of rebellion and idolatry in the plain beneath.

Behold, all Israel eating and drinking, dancing and playing, before a dumb idol, the similitude of a brute beast!—They worshipped a molten calf, and ascribed Almighty power unto it: "These be thy gods, O Israel! which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." What a melancholy view is here presented of the corruption, degeneracy, and degradation, of human nature!

Behold! a people lost to every noble, generous, and manly principle; restrained by no law; awed by no threatning; and susceptible of no endearment, and not even influenced by shame, boldly overleaping the bounds both of moral and religious obligation; and in it, behold "the carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be!"

The law which the hand of Omnipotence had impressed on the mind of his rational creature, this law he had condescended to engrave on tables of stone. Moses descending in haste with his charge in his hand, perceives at a distance the disorder which raged in the camp; and, in a transport of indignation, he cast the tables out of his hand, and brake them to pieces. The man who is thus animated with zeal for the glory of God, has forgotten what fear is. Aaron, under the influence of the fear of man, gave way to

popular phrensy, and fabricated a golden calf. Moses, inspired with Divine fear, defies and despises the multitude; consumes the idol in the fire, and grinds it to powder. This is that Moses of whom they talked so contemptuously a little while ago. What, not one of the thousands of Israel who worshipped the image of the beast, bold enough to protect his Dagon! No, they stand abashed, and feel how awful goodness is.

What a pitiful figure does Aaron make, when called to an account! He would have it believed that the form and fashion of the idol was the effect of accident, not of design:—"I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." But the making of this idol is not the whole of Aaron's criminality. He built an altar before it, made a proclamation, and said, to-morrow is the feast unto the Lord. Who is not shocked at his appropriating the institution of the living God, to the profane worship of an idol! Think not, however, vain man, that the Israelites were sinners above all that have dwelt on the face of the earth. When thou hast thoroughly searched and known thyself, no account of human frailty will appear exaggerated.

With so much clearer discoveries of the nature and will of the one living and true God, how have we kept the first commandment: "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might!" They framed and worshipped a golden image. What myriads hourly bend the knee to a golden idol, changed only a little in form! See the temple of Mammon, how it is crowded!

"And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff necked people! Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.—And I will make of thee a great nation." A selfish spirit would have been ready to grasp at such a proposal. How affecting then is the intercession of Moses! And he returned unto the Lord, and said: "Oh! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written." Here is love which is stronger than death!

Moses had entreated the Lord to turn from his fierce wrath, and repent himself of the evil against his people: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, for mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, &c." The holy man is concerned that the Divine conduct should be justified in the eyes of the Heathen. He prefers the fulfilling of the

ancient covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the establishment of a new covenant, though with himself and his seed. He is willing to decrease, and that his family should become obscure, rather than the Lord should not be magnified, and Israel be saved; and, as a prince, he has power with God, and prevails, to prevent the execution of the general doom. But some thousands were directed to be slain by the hands of their brethren the Levites, whose office it was to shed the blood of the victims intended to be an atonement for guilt.

God had hitherto condescended to conduct Israel by that wonderful symbol of his presence, the pillar of a cloud and that of fire; provoked by their rebellion, this is withdrawn, and they are left to pursue their march through paths of their own choosing. What must it have been to one who felt like Moses, to be commanded to proceed to the conquest of Canaan, destitute of the presence and support of God, the glory and the strength of Israel!

It was, proceeds Hunter, like sending a ship into a tempestuous ocean, without ballast, without mast or sail, to be driven at the mercy of every blast, and laid under the necessity of sinking in the mighty deep.

Moses apprehends the full extent of an attempt so perilous, and deprecates it with all the energy of supplication. For the Lord hath declared: "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff necked people, lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard, they mourned, and no man did put on his ornaments." This was a stripping time; for the Lord had said: "Put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount of Horeb." Direction is given to remove the tabernacle without the camp; a few who continue faithful, adhere to that Divine instrument of protection, and follow it. The cloudy pillar, which, during the period of riot and revolt, had in wrath departed, returned to its residence, the tabernacle.

In the eyes of astonished Israel, Moses enters undismayed into that mansion of Divine Glory; proceeds to meet God, as a man to meet his friend, and to renew the conference which had been broken off in the mount. "And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door." Jehovah then graciously relents, being mindful of his covenants, and again undertakes the safe conduct of his peo-

ple: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

In this interview, we read, the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. This personal acquaintance increases Moses's desire after the knowledge of Divine perfection. As if he had seen nothing of the excellent glory in the bush, as if the awful manifestation of Sinai had been nothing, he entreats the Lord to show him his glory. If any can rest satisfied with what they have known of God, it is a sign they have lost the impression of his goodness. The more any know of Him, the more they will desire to know.

And Moses was called up again to mount Sinai, and directed to take the two tables of stone which he he had made, that the Lord might write upon them the words that were in the first tables which were broken; "and the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." In this interview, was a recital of the instructions which had been given before, respecting the tabarnacle and its service.

At this time, Moses acquired a glory which he was not conscious of. He wist not that the skin of his face shone, and the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him. They shrunk

from the presence of their gracious leader and intercessor. What would render the presence of his affectionate brother formidable to Aaron? That which drove the first transgressor to hide himself from the presence of the Lord God.

Moses, conscious of good will to all, had procured freedom and reconciliation for them; but, unconscious of the change which had passed upon his person, he observed, with surprise, that every one avoided him. Whether he discovered the brightness of his countenance, in its dazzling effect upon them, or in whatsoever manner he perceived it, he put on a veil to accommodate himself to the circumstances of the people he was to instruct.

That this appearance of Moses, was not merely an accidental circumstance, but designed by Providence to be a symbolical representation of the whole Mosaical dispensation, is evident from the testimony of the Apostle to the Gentiles: "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious! For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in

glory," &c. "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. And not as Moses, who put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished. But their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away, in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ; "who is the end of the law, for righteousness."

After the types were explained, the predictions accomplished, and Moses and Elias had ministered unto Christ in the transfiguration; had brought all their glory, and laid it at the feet of the great Apostle, or High Priest of our profession; still the people who had the best means of information, and of comparing things foretold with those which were come to pass, read of them, and they read on till now, under the power of prejudice. And he who sees in Moses, and in the writings of the Old Testament, nothing but the histories of certain events, long since passed, and confined in their operation to a particular district; nothing but the religious usages, and ceremonies of a particular people, looks with a bandage over his eyes, understands not what he reads, and therefore cannot profit.

The Apostle Paul himself, heard and read Moses with the veil over his face, until the time of his conversion; till then he was understood only in the letter, not in the Spirit.

Moses did not descend from the mount with impaired strength, though he had been upon it forty days, fasting. The Jewish Rabbins consider the unabated vigour, the unfading lustre of the latter years of the life of Moses, as the effect of his having been forty days in familiar intercourse with God.

What a sublime idea does this suggest of communion with God! To what a height of glory can it raise a fallen creature! By this intercourse, man becomes transformed into the image of God! The change may be seen and felt in the serenity of the countenance, in the kindness of the eye, in the melody of the voice, and in the sweetness of the whole deportment. It is easy to conceive what the world would be, destitute of the modes and offices of religion, when we consider what men are with the advantages of line upon line, precept upon precept, revelation upon revelation.

Religious ceremonies, and observations of ancient nations, whatever were their origin, excite our curiosity; but when to antiquity is superadded Divine authority; when we behold the

great Jehovah condescending to describe and appoint the rites of his own worship; to exhibit a model for all the instruments to be employed in his service, we are filled with wonder. But all that was formal and instrumental in the ancient dispensation, seems to have been, by the special appointment of Providence, annihilated and destroyed, that the spirit only of it might remain. The tabernacle and temple, and their service, exist only in description, and in those simpler and more spiritual manifestations to which they have given place. The legal economy introduced that of grace by the gospel. The dispensation of grace in like manner, is now performing its work, unfolding and introducing the Kingdom of glory.

The events of Aaron's life are so blended with those of Moses, his brother, that many of them have been already adverted to; we shall therefore only notice a few passages of his history, which are personal and peculiar.

The genealogy of the family of Levi is traced, to show with what care Providence watched over, and preserved the royal and sacerdotal line, till the Divine purpose was accomplished, till the descent of the promised seed was ascertained. Then genealogy was as it were, broken into innumerable fragments, connexion and succession of

families were blotted out, as of no moment or consideration.

The appointment of Aaron to the priesthood was divine; "for no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." The institution consisted of a succession of men, and of a service ordained to be a perpetual memorial to mankind of their apostacy and guilt, and of the means of pardon and reconciliation; of their being by nature and wicked works, afar off, but made nigh by the blood of atonement. Aaron was eighty-four years old when he was called to this high office; he no doubt had acquired a high degree of estimation, from the honourable part he had in the effecting of the deliverance from Egypt; but the faithful pen of inspiration represents him, nevertheless, as a man liable to many infirmities.

The solemn consecration of Aaron was performed by Moses himself. Aaron and his sons were conducted to the doors of the tabernacle of the congregation, in the presence of a public assembly, stripped of their usual garments, and washed with water. He was then arrayed in the several parts of the sacerdotal habit in their order. The holy vessels of the sanctuary, and all its sacred utensils, were then anointed with the holy oil of consecration; and, last of all, Aa-

ron himself, the living instrument of Divine worship, was set apart to his momentuous charge, by a copious sprinkling of the same sacred perfume.

His sons were then invested with their proper habits, and a threefold sacrifice was performed; a bullock for a sin offering, a ram for a burnt offering, and another denominated the ram of consecration. Without going into a minute detail, we shall observe, that by the imposition of Aaron's hands and those of his sons, upon the head of the victim, a solemn wish was expressed, that their guilt might be transferred and imputed to him, and his blood accepted as a ransom for their forfeited lives. Here then was the innocent, suffering for the guilty; the substitute, not the criminal, bleeding and dying; so that the form of the consecration taught the necessity of atonement, and pointed to Him whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, and to put to grief; who "was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed."

We shall pass over Aaron's plot with Miriam, his sister, to diminish the respect due to Moses; the criminality of Nadab and Abihu, in offering strange fire before the Lord; and also the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The swift judgments which followed their transgressions

are left upon record as a warning to all generations.

After these instances of defection, Jehovah condescends to give a new proof of his choice and preference of Aaron, which was to serve as a lasting memorial. Moses is directed to take of each of the tribes of Israel a rod, and to inscribe every one with the name of that tribe to which it belonged; but upon that for Levi to inscribe the name of Aaron. They were to be laid up together, over night, before the Lord, in the tabernacle of the congregation, before the testimony; and previous intimation was given to all concerned, that, by the next morning, God would give an explicit and unequivocal declaration of his will respecting the office of priesthood. The rods of the eleven other tribes remained as they were deposited, sapless and dead; but the rod of Aaron, as if it had been a branch still united to a living root, and by a process of vegetation much more rapid than nature knows, not only brought forth in the course of one night, buds and blossoms, but yielded ripe almonds.

This mark of preference having been openly exhibited for the conviction of all, commandment is given to deposit this wondrous rod before God, with the other sacred furniture of the holy place, to serve to latest posterity, as a token against the rebels.

Aaron continues to enjoy the dignity, and to perform the duties of the priesthood, for thirty one years longer. "Then the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, saying: Aaron shall be gathered unto his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazer his son." And Aaron died there, in the top of the mount, in the 120th year of his age. And Moses and Eleazer came down from the mount; and when all the congregation saw that he was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Hunter's Sacred Biography.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BALAAM.

THE encampments and progress of the Israelites, are now no longer the wanderings of a devoted people, doomed to die in the wilderness; but the bold, direct, and successful progress of a warlike nation, from conquest to conquest.

A multitude so great, subsisting in a desert so long, in a manner so singular, could not but attract the notice of the surrounding nations, who must have been anxiously solicitous, which way their route was directed. Being arrived at the borders of the wilderness, contiguous to the country of the Amorites, but not imagining that any part of their inheritance was to be allotted on this side of Jordan, they petition Sihon, the king of the country, to grant them leave to pass peaceably through his territories. This he roughly refuses; and, without waiting to see whether Israel intended to attempt a passage by force, collects his whole strength, advances into

the wilderness to attack them, and thereby hastens his own destruction; his whole army is smitten with the edge of the sword, and his whole land falls an easy prey to the victors.

Og, king of Bashan, is rash enough to follow the example of Sihon, and is also subdued, and the fertile plains over which he reigns, swell the triumphs of Israel.

Advancing forward to Jordan, they pitch their tents in the plains of Moab. The Israelites had been expressly forbidden to disturb the Moabites, who were descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

The report of the victories over Sihon and Og, it seems, had roused the attention and the jealousy of Balak, the king of Moab. Instead of employing the rational policy of courting alliance with a people so formidable, and who were not disposed to molest him, he had recourse to the mean, timid, and contemptible arts of necromancy or divination. For this purpose the elders of Moab, with the elders of also Midian, were sent to[x] Aram, in the mountains of the East, with large money in their hands, styled the rewards of divination, unto Balaam, the son of

x Bryant thinks Aram, should have been Adom, or Edom.

Bosor, a noted enchanter of those times, with this message:

"*Behold! there is a people come out of Egypt, behold! they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now over therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people, for they are too mighty for me; peradventure, I shall prevail that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I wot that he whom thou blessest, is blessed, and he whom thou cursest, is cursed.*"

Herein God fulfilled the words of the oracle, pronounced in the song of Moses thirty-eight years before: "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed, the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold of them."

Balaam was a remarkable instance of a heathen being a prophet and a worshipper of the true God, as appears by his answer to the princes of Moab: "Get ye into your land, for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." In those early ages, the worship of God, and the worship of idols seem often to have been blended together. And it was, afterwards, often the case of Israel, that they served God a little, and Baal a little. And is it not so, with a great part of mankind, down to the present day.

But Balaam was not proof against importunity, when Balak sent to him a second time, by princes more honourable than the first, promising to promote him to great honours. The Lord, who searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, put Balaam's integrity and sincerity, on this occasion, to the test, in giving him a sign, as the condition on which he might go with the princes of Moab, and that was, their coming to call him in the morning. It does not appear that Balaam waited for this, but rose up in the morning, saddled his ass, and went with them; by which it was manifest that he went greedily after rewards, and that he suffered his inclination to take the lead of duty.

Bishop Newton says: "He was a strange mixture of a man; but so is every man, more or less." There are inconsistences and contradictions in every character, though not so great, perhaps, and notorious as in Balaam's. He must have disregarded Divine counsel; for we read God's anger was kindled against him, because he went. His design might be to have recourse to soothsaying; a miracle, therefore, to confound his projects, might be as necessary, as when the magicians in Egypt opposed Moses and Aaron.

The story of Balaam's ass, has been made the standing jest of infidels; but it may be asked, was the speaking of Balaam's[x] ass, or the swallowing up of the magicians' rods, by that of Aaron, the greater miracle?

The apostle Peter says: "the dumb ass forbad the madness of the prophet." What could be more mortifying unto a prophet, than to be convinced of blindness by an ass, and to be reproved of perverseness by the most untoward, and obstinate of all brute animals? When one dignified with the spirit of prophecy, runs counter to Divine direction, who would not expect some signal judgment to overtake such a person? And could the Most High God have displayed his sovereignty in a more striking manner, than in thus controlling and getting himself dominion over all the arts and powers of soothsaying?

What a pitiful figure Balaam makes, when he says to the angel: "If it displeases thee, I will get myself back again!" The circumstances which Moses has recorded on the oc-

x In Bryant's observations, it appears that the worship in Midian and Moab, was addressed principally to Baal Peor, to whom the ass was particularly sacred; that in the temple at Petor, this animal was represented as a type of the Deity; and that therefore the miracle was well adapted to humble the false prophet, and to enlighten the eyes of God's people.

casion, are fraught with instruction to all generations. In this mad career of Balaam, what could be more proper than to convince him, that the mouth and tongue were under God's direction; that the same Divine Power which caused the ass to speak contrary to its nature, could make him utter blessings contrary to his inclination. We find accordingly, that he was overruled to bless the people, though he came prepared and disposed to curse them.

We may be the more certain, that Balaam was influenced to speak contrary to his inclination, because, when he had done prophesying, though he had been ordered in anger to depart and to flee to his place, yet he had the meanness to stay; and gave that wicked counsel, whereby the people were enticed to transgress with the daughters of Moab; in consequence of which twenty-four thousand died of the plague. The miracle then was a proper sign to Balaam, and had the intended effect; which we may the more easily believe, when we see him afterwards inspired with such knowledge of futurity. It was not more above the natural capacity of the ass to speak, than it was above the natural capacity of Balaam to foretel so many distant events.

The prophecies render the miracle more credible; and we shall have less occasion to doubt

of the one, when we see the accomplishment of the other. His predictions are indeed wonderful, whether we consider the matter, or the style, which possesses uncommon force and energy, as well as beauty. They are called parables in the sacred text; but we shall select such parts only, as have the most remarkable signification.

After his first sacrifice, he declared:

"Lo! the people shall dwell alone; and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

How could Balaam, upon a distant view only of a people whom he had never seen before, discover the genius and manners, not only of the people then living, but of their posterity to the latest generations! What renders it more extraordinary, is, the singularity of the character; that they should differ from all the people in the world; should dwell among the nations without mixing or incorporating with any of them. The time when this was affirmed increases the wonder; it being before the people were well known in the world, before their religion and government were established, and even before they had obtained a settlement any where. But that this description of their character was fully verified in the event, all history testifies, and we have ocular demonstration of it at this day.

As Balaam beheld that the excellency of the condition of Israel, under Divine limitations and appointment, was so different from that of being obnoxious to Almighty judgments and displeasure, which situation he had just before been in, we are not surprised at the exclamation, which seems to have been involuntary: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

But it appears he went to seek enchantments at this time. This might be permitted to convince him they had no power over those whom the Lord had blessed, and that he should publicly acknowledge it:

"*Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.*"

From which this remarkable inference may be deduced, that it is only those who give way to the suggestions and influence of evil, that become subject to the powers of darkness.

Balaam's prophecy, after the third sacrifice, is a confirmation of the former, and is more explicit:

"*He shall eat up the nations, his enemies; and shall break their bows, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion; who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.*"

These expressions are a manifest prophecy of the victories which the Israelites should gain over their enemies, and particularly over the Canaanites; of their secure possession and quiet enjoyment of the land afterwards; particularly in the reigns of David and Solomon.

At the same time Balaam declared:

"His king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted."

Wonderful as this was, it was accomplished by Saul, who "smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt; and he took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword." 1 *Sam.* xv. 7 *and* 8.

Before Balaam takes his leave of Balak, he undertakes to advertise him what this people should do to his people, in the latter days; by which phrase is meant the time to come, be it more or less. He begins with what more immediately concerns the Moabites, the people to which he was speaking:

"There shall come a star out of Jacob; and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel."

The star and the sceptre are metaphors, probably borrowed from the ancient hieroglyphics, which much influenced the language of the east;

and they evidently denote some illustrious ruler, whom he thus particularly characterizes:

"*And shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.*"

This was executed by David; "for he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground."—It is conjectured that Sheth was either some eminent place or person among the Moabites.

"*And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies.*"

This was also fulfilled by David: "Throughout all Edom put he garrisons; and all they of Edom became David's servants." Seir is the name of the mountains of Edom, so that even their mountains and fastnesses could not defend the Idumeans from David and his Captains.

"*Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.*"

And David's General smote every male in Edom; "for six months did Joab remain there with all Israel until he had cut off every male in Edom." 1 *Kings* xi. 15, *and* 16.

We see how this prophecy was fulfilled in the person and acts of David; but most Jewish, as well as Christian writers, apply it primarily perhaps to David, but ultimately to the Messiah.

Onkelos, who is the most ancient and valuable of the Chaldee paraphrasts, interprets it of the Messiah.

"*There shall come a star out of Jacob; and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.*"

This prophecy, without doubt, belongs principally to Christ, of whom David was, in several respects, a type and figure. It appears to have been understood by the Jews, as a prophecy of the Messiah; because the false Christ who appeared in the reign of the emperor Adrian, assumed the title of Barchochebas, or *the son of the star*, in allusion to the prophecy, and in order to have it believed that he was the star whom Balaam had seen afar off. Origen and Eusebius affirm, that it was in consequence of Balaam's prophecies, which were known and believed in the east, that the Magi, upon the appearance of a new star, came to Jerusalem to worship Him who was born King of the Jews.

And when he looked upon Amalek, he said: "*Amalek was the first of nations; but his latter end shall be, that he perish for ever.*

Saul and David made great destruction of them; and, at the last, the sons of Simeon, in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, smote the rest of the Amalekites who were escaped; and dwelt in their habitation. 1 *Chron.* iv. 42, *and* 43. And

where is the name or the nation of Amalek now? Just so much is known of them, as is sufficient to show that what was threatened hath been punctually fulfilled.

"*And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said: Strong is thy dwelling place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.*"

Jethro, the father in law of Moses, is, in one place, called the priest of Midian, and in another the Kenite. *Judg.* i. *verse* 16. We may infer therefore that the Midianites and Kenites were the same, or at least that the Kenites were some of the tribes of Midian.

The Midianites appear to have been confederated with the Moabites, in the application to Balaam to curse Israel; and we might naturally expect some notice to be taken of them, in the course of these prophecies. We read, 1 *Sam.* xv. 6, that there were Kenites dwelling among the Amalekites; and we find the Kenites mentioned the next after the Amalekites. Their situation is said to be strong and secure, among the mountains: "thou puttest thy nest in the rock:" wherein is an allusion to the name, the same word, in Hebrew, signifying a *nest* and a *Kenite*.

"Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry him away captive."

When Saul destroyed the Amalekites, he ordered the Kenites to depart; so they departed from the Amalekites, 1 *Sam.* xv, 6 at which time they were reduced to a low and weak condition; but as they are mentioned among the Jews after their return from captivity, we have reason to conclude they were carried away captives by the kings of Assyria.

And he took up his parable, and said:

"Alas, who shall live, when God doeth this!"

This exclamation implies that he is now prophesying of very distant, and very calamitous times.

"And ships shall come from the coasts of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish forever."

Chittim was one of the sons of Javan, who was one of the sons of Japheth; by whose posterity the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen.* x. 2, were divided and peopled; that is Europe, and the countries to which the Asiatics passed by sea; for such the Hebrews called islands. It plainly appears, that wherever the land of Chittim, or the isles of Chittim are mention, some countries or islands, in the Mediterranean, are intended.

Daniel, foretelling the exploits of Antiochus Epiphanes, saith: "that he should come toward the south," that is, invade Egypt; "but the ships of Chittim shall come against him, therefore he shall be grieved and return." *Chap.* xi. 29, 30. The ships of Chittim can be no other than the ships of the Romans, whose[x] ambassadors coming from Italy to Greece, and from thence to Alexandria, obliged Antiochus, to his great grief and disappointment, to depart from Egypt without accomplishing his design. The Author of the first book of the Maccabees, speaking of Alexander, son of Philip of Macedonia, saith, that he came out of the land of Chittim.

And afterwards, Perseus, the last king of Macedon, he calleth the king of the Cittims. By these, and numerous other instances, it appears, that, the land of Chittim, was a general name for the countries and islands in the Mediterranean; and therefore, when Balaam said that ships should come from the coast of Chittim, both Italy and Greece might be included in that denomination; and it is true of both, that they were the scourges of Asia.

"*And shall afflict Asshur.*"

Asshur, as we noted before, signifies properly the Assyrians, the descendants of Asshur. And

x See Livy, Book 45, Chapters 10, 11, 12.

it is so well known as to require no particular proof, that the Grecians, under the command of Alexander the Great, subdued all these countries.

The Romans afterward extended their empire into the same regions. Dion[x] informs us, Assyria, properly so called, was conquered by the emperor Trajan.

"*And shall afflict Eber.*"

Two interpretations are proposed of the word Eber, either the posterity of the man so called, or the people who dwelt on the other side of the river Euphrates. But whichsoever of these interpretations we prefer, the prophecy was alike fulfilled. If we understand it of the people bordering on the Euphrates, they, as well as the Assyrians, were subdued both by the Grecians and Romans.

If we understand it of the posterity of Eber, the Hebrews were afflicted, though not so much by Alexander himself, yet by his successors the Seleveidæ; and particularly by Antiochus Epiphanes, who spoiled Jerusalem, defiled the temple, and slew all those who adhered to the law of Moses.

They were worse afflicted by the Romans, who not only subdued and oppressed them, and made

x Dion's Roman History, Book 78, page 783.

their country a province of the empire, but at last took away their place and nation, and sold and dispersed them over the earth.

It appears then, that Balaam was a prophet divinely inspired, or he could never have foretold so many distant events, some of which are fulfilling in the world at this time. What a singular demonstration in favour of Israel, that a prophet called from a distant country, and at the same time a wicked man, should be obliged to bear testimony to their righteousness, and holiness! Commendations from an enemy, must be commendations indeed. Moses did justice to himself, as well as to his nation, in recording these transactions. They are not only a material part of his history, but are likewise a strong confirmation of the truth of his religion[1].

From what we have already seen of the fulfilment of prophecies, we may compare the Scriptures to a vast machine, erected for the carrying on of the Lord's work, to which, in every age, some addition has been making. When we behold only some parts of it, we may be at a loss to conceive their utility; or may have very erroneous ideas concerning them; but when we are placed in a situation to take a comprehensive view of the plan, we see that every section of it

has a place to which it is adapted and fitted, in a particular manner. This may teach those who have been too idle, or careless, to take the pains of examining the curious structure of its machinery, to beware of judging of what they do not understand. It is for want of serious inquiry and patient investigation, that there can be any unbelievers of the truths of Christianity.

Prophecy serves to raise a general expectation of the event predicted, to excite attention, and inquisitiveness; and, thereby, to prepare the minds of men for that full conviction which it finally hath in view.

"This intercourse between heaven and earth," saith Bishop Hurd, in his introduction to the study of prophecy, "can be carried on only with the sublime view of preserving an awful sense of Providence, in an impious and careless world.—Nothing less than the maintenance of His supreme authority, over his moral creatures, could be an object worthy of his interposing in the affairs of men, in so remarkable a manner.—To keep alive a prevailing sense of their dependance upon Him, is then the ultimate end of prophecy; and what is more suitable to the best ideas we can form of Divine Wisdom, than that this celestial light should be afforded to such ages and nations,

as are most in want of that great and salutary principle?"

In no instance is the assertion of the apostle Peter more strikingly verified, than in the case of Balaam: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." And if one of his description was thus wrought upon, we may be the more disposed to believe, that "holy men of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOSES.

WE have pursued the history of Aaron, and of Balaam, in a continued series, that we might prosecute the remainder of the history of Moses, without any further interruption. Moses had lately descended from Mount Hor, after performing the last offices of humanity, to Aaron his brother.

Immediately after this, we have an account of the king of the Canaanites fighting against the Israelites; and they utterly destroyed the Canaanites and their cities. But notwithstanding this, on encompassing the land of Edom, the people spake against God and Moses; "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness; for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people; and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died."

Divine intention, in punishment, is correction and amendment, not ruin; returning mercy therefore meets the first symptoms of repentance. Moses is commanded to make a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and the Lord said: "It shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."

[k] The interpretation of the mystery is furnished by Christ himself, in his conversation with Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." From this it is evident that many particulars in the Jewish history and political economy, had an interest and importance, which extended far beyond the time which gave rise to them, and also beyond the sensible and obvious appearance. Our Lord was instructing Nicodemus in the object and end of his own mission; was deducing the nature and tendency of the Gospel dispensation, from the established rites of the Mosaic, and the received facts of the Jewish history; with which Nicodemus was perfectly well acquainted.

He appeals from the noted event to one, which was shortly to take place; betwixt

which a striking resemblance should be apparent. He compares the elevation of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, for the healing of the Israelites, who were perishing by the stings of a serpent; and the elevation of the Son of Man upon the cross, the propitiation for the sins of the world; that when this last display was exhibited, Nicodemus, and every honest disciple of Moses, might be satisfied that "God had, at sundry times, and in divers manners," presented to the fathers, as in a glass, the method of redemption by Jesus Christ.

How could he have more strikingly exhibited the connexion between the Mosaic, and the Gospel dispensations? The means of cure are not such as human wisdom could have devised; they are the sovereign appointment of the Most High. The reason of man would deem, as incredible and absurd, a lifeless serpent of metal operating as an antidote to the mortal poison of one alive. Such was the doctrine of the cross in the eyes of prejudice, and philosophy, and science, falsely so called. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." 1 *Corin.* i. 18. The virtue flows from the Divine appointment, operating with the believing act of the patient. To the sufferer who

averts his face, or wilfully and contemptuously shuts his eyes, the ensign is displayed in vain. To the despiser and the impenitent, Christ has died in vain.

The idolatrous defection of Israel, in the plains of Moab, has been visited with a plague which swept away twenty four thousand of them.

The history of Israel may be denominated, the history of human nature. Did they discover a stubbornness which no calamity could tame, no kindness mollify? a prefidiousness which no plea could excuse? an ingratitude which no partiality could extenuate? Alas! we need not travel to the deserts of Arabia, we need not look back to the days of the golden calf, nor of the waters of Meribah, for the persons who were actuated by such a spirit. We have but to look into our own hearts, we have but to review our own lives, in order to be satisfied, that such a spirit hath existed, and that we have just reason to abhor ourselves, and to repent in dust and ashes.

After the staying of the plague, Moses is commanded, with the assistance of Eleazar, to number the people from twenty years old, and upwards; by which this remarkable fact is ascertained, that only two remain of those who came up out of Egypt; viz. Caleb the son of Jephunneth, and Joshua the son of Nun. The Israelites

are now six hundred and one thousand, seven hunhred and thirty men. It is remarkable that in thirty eight years, the difference is no more than 1820 men[k].

The children of Israel were not brought out of Egypt, until they were in the most vile and debased state. The rigour of a long continued slavery, had blunted the edge of every noble faculty, had debased all the powers of the mind. It was not until they were in the worst of conditions, that the Most High interposed for their deliverance, in order that the Omnipotence of his arm might be made manifest, that it reacheth to the lowest and most abject situation of his creatures, and is sufficient for their help.

We have seen that Moses himself was under sentence of condemnation: though he desired to go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, Lebanon; yet he was not permitted to pass to it.

But his own attachment to life appears to be absorbed by the ardour of his concern for the public good: "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." This marks the superiority

of a mind occupied with the glory of God, and the good of his people.

Moses sees, without murmuring, the dignity departing from his family, and given to his servant. And he proceeds to invest Joshua with his office, as he had done Aaron with the robes of priesthood. Forms were necessary, because men were not spiritual. Forms were interposed, that the understanding and the heart might be approached through the medium of sense. And of all forms instituted by Divine authority, that of laying on hands is one of the most ancient, and, on account of its significant simplicity, one of the most striking.

Moses had received warning to depart; but the hour of his release is not yet come. Though his offence at the waters of Meribah, must be punished with death, his intercourse with Jehovah is not interrupted; nor his zeal in performing the duties of his station abated. He executes the judgments of the Lord after this, in exterminating the whole nation of the Midianites, though supported by five kings and their armies; along with whom fell Balaam, by the edge of the sword, an awful monument, how certainly, however slowly, justice overtakes the sinner. The state of Midian at this season exhibited the last stage of moral depravity. The Midianites held up to

mankind a fearful but instructive example, of the inevitable consequences of vice. Up to similar causes, the downfall of still greater states may be traced.

"In the leader and commander of Israel, we have beheld a man, far exalted above all temporary, above all selfish concerns; occupied only with the interests of truth and justice, the duties of his station, the prosperity of his charge, and the glory of Him who had conferred it upon him. What anxiety does he discover that Israel should act wisely, and go on prosperously after his death! By word, by writing, by authority, in the spirit of meekness and love, he cautions, he warns, he remonstrates. The whole book of Deuteronomy may be considered as a series of powerful, pathetic, and tender addresses; delivered at different times within the compass of the last month of his life, by Moses to Israel, in the near and certain prospect of dissolution. It is a body of instruction wonderfully adapted to the occasion.

The grand object of Moses, is to establish the importance and necessity of knowing the Divine law, and, for that end, to make it the subject of continual meditation. The young must not plead exemption on account of his youth, nor the old plead the privilege of age. No engagement of

any kind, entitles to a dispensation from the superior obligations of the law of the Most High. And Moses displays, with singular skill and address, the motives for making the law of God the rule of their conduct. 1st. That these laws all issue from the love of God as their source, and that their great aim is to engage us to love, with supreme affection, a God who is supremely excellent and amiable, who is the Fountain of all goodness and purity. 2nd. That the observance of the laws has a tendency to procure and preserve, both public and private felicity; to make them respected in the eyes of the nations, and thereby insure their tranquillity.

But while he forcibly inculcates the motives of obedience, inspired by every tender, by every awful consideration, he finds himself under the unpleasant necessity of venting the keenest reproaches for the people's perverseness and ingratitude. That exquisite, beautiful and pathetic song, with which he closes his tender expostulation, consists in a great measure of severe upbraidings: "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children." And it contains predictions, clear, pointed, and strong, of the fearful judgments which should overtake that sinful people, and involve them and their posterity in utter destruction.

"And the Lord said unto Moses: Behold, the days approach, in which thou must die! Call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle, in a pillar of a cloud."

This secret conference being ended, they return to the people; and Moses publicly delivers to the Levites a copy of the law which he had transcribed with his own hand, to be laid up in the side of the ark, as a standing witness for God, against a sinful people; and the business of the day concludes with a public recital, from the lips of Moses, of that moving and pathetic song which is contained in the 32d chapter.

This sacred song, every Israelite was to commit to memory, to repeat frequently, and to teach it every man to his son. And a wonderful composition it is, abounding with the most magnificent figures of speech; adding the grace of poetry to all the force of truth.

Moses has now fulfilled his day; he has glorified God on earth; it only remains that he glorify Him by submission to his sovereign will in dying. Behold him, then, solitarily and solemnly advancing from the plain to the mountain of Ne-

ho! the eyes of all Israel, doubtless suffused with tears, trace his footsteps till they can behold him no more. But says Hunter, he still beholds their goodly tents. He sees all Israel in one point of view: Jehovah dwelling in the midst of his people, the tabernacle with the pillar of cloud resting upon it; his sight is concentrated on the happy spot, and his whole soul goes out in one general departing blessing.

As he ascends, the prospect brightens and expands. He can trace Jordan from its source till it falls into the sea.—His eye wanders with delight from hill to hill; from plain, to plain. He sees, on this side, mount Lebanon losing its lofty head in the clouds; the ocean and the sky meeting together to terminate his view; beneath him the land which Abraham had measured with his foot; in which Isaac and Jacob had sojourned as strangers; which God had fenced, cultivated, planted, and enriched, by the hand of the Canaanite, for his beloved people[k].

This reminds us of the rich description Moses had before given of it, unto the Israelites: "For the Lord, thy God, bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths, that spring out of vallies and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and of ho-

ney; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread, without scarceness; thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." *Deut.* viii. 7, 8, 9.

And the Lord said unto Moses: "This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; saying, I will give it unto thy seed. I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." The eye which age had not made dim, must at length be closed by death; the strength which one hundred and twenty years had not been able to impair, might, in a moment, by a touch of the finger of God, be dissolved. We may conclude that in the midst of a vision, so divine, Moses departed.

When we see the prophet of the law so far from having power to introduce others into the promised rest, that he himself could not enter in, because of unbelief, we are admonished to apply for assistance to a more potent arm, to cleave to Him, who, by dying, has overcome death, and Him who had the power of death.

Moses died in the year of the world 2553; before Christ 1450 years; after the flood 897 years. Before his death, he uttered a clear and distinct prediction of the Messiah, which, in the fulness of time, was exactly accomplished; and, after a lapse of fifteen centuries, we find him again on

mount Tabor, appearing in glory at the time of our Lord's transfiguration, and speaking of the death which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

"Turn up the inspired volume at what page we will, we have a person, an event, a service, or a prediction, unfolding, in some form or other, the merciful purpose of Him, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory." They all speak a uniform language; all give witness to the same person; all disclose their own peculiar portion of the Gospel treasure, for the illumination of an ignorant, the reformation of a corrupted, and the salvation of a perishing world.

The writings of Moses exhibit a singular display of this grand combined plan. He traces nature up to its birth, and instructs how the heaven and the earth rose out of chaos. He conducts us through some of the mazes of the moral government of the great Supreme; and there too, unfolds wild uproar reduced to order, and the wrath of man working the righteousness of God.—He draws aside the curtains of the night, and the day spring from on high dawns on fallen humanity. He attends us through the morning of that bright day, and leaves behind him the assurance that the fulness of time would come, when the

morning light would advance with glowing splendour unto the perfect day.

Moses, not only in what he wrote, but in what he was and acted, illustriously displayed the grace of God in the redemption of the world. Not only did he testify concerning the great Deliverer; but his own person, his character, his offices, were a prefiguration of Him who was to come; to whom all the prophets gave witness[k].

Under the direction of the spirit of prophecy, Moses raised the expectation of mankind to the appearance of a prophet, like unto himself, but far superior, who should communicate unto them the whole counsel of God, whom they were to hear in all things; and it should "come to pass that every soul who would not hear Him, should be destroyed from among the people." *Acts* iii. 23.

The proper character of a prophet, is to communicate the Divine will; for though, under the Gospel dispensation, this is written on the mind of every man, so that in truth every man is a law, is a prophet to himself; yet these characters are liable to be effaced by education, example, and superstition.

Vicious propensities obliterate this writing; habit and the commerce of the world harden the

heart, and lull the conscience asleep. Hence the continued necessity of a prophet, of a minister, of a message from heaven, to call men back to God, to republish the original law, and to restore its obliterated characters.

There is still wanting the general and leading idea of the history of Moses, which is the resemblance of the type to the person typified; we shall therefore subjoin the following analogy.

MOSES.	CHRIST.
Fled from his country to escape the hands of the king.	Was carried into Egypt to avoid the hands of Herod.
Was bid to return; for the men were dead that sought his life.	Arise, take the young child; for they are dead which sought his life.
Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.	Refused to be made a king.
By Divine power, overcame the magicians.	Overcame, and cast out evil spirits.
Confirmed his religion by many signs and wonders.	Confirmed his religion by many miracles.
Promised a holy land.	Promised a better country, that is, a heavenly.

MOSES.	CHRIST.
Fasted forty days in mount Sanai.	Fasted forty days in the wilderness.
Supplied bread in the wilderness.	Fed 5000 with a few loaves and fishes.
Walked through the sea, as on dry ground.	Walked on the sea, and enabled Peter to do so.
Caused the waters to go backward.	Rebuked both the wind and the sea.
His face shone when he came from the mount.	In his transfiguration his face shone as the sun.
By prayer cured Miriam of her leprosy.	By his word healed divers lepers.
Appointed 70 elders over the people.	Appointed 70 disciples.
Sent twelve men to spy out the land.	Sent twelve disciples to visit all nations.
Interceded for transgressors, and caused an atonement to be made for them.	Was our intercessor and atonement.
Instituted a passover when a lamb was sacrificed, none of whose bones were broken.	Was that paschal lamb; not a bone of Him was broken.

MOSES.	CHRIST.
Promised another prophet.	Promised another comforter.

But the greatest similitude was in their being law givers, which no prophet was, besides Moses and Christ. Moses had a very perverse and wicked generation committed to his care; he did his utmost to make the people obedient, and to save them from ruin, but in vain: in the space of forty years they all fell in the wilderness, except two. Christ also was given to a generation not less wicked and perverse; his instructions were lost upon them, and, in about the same space after they had rejected Him, they were destroyed.

"Search the records of universal history," says Jortin, "and see if we can find a man who is so like to Moses, as Christ was; and so like to Christ, as Moses was. If we cannot find such a one, then we have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph."

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE PENTATEUCH.

BEFORE we proceed to the predictions of Moses, we shall lay before our readers the confirmation of the authority of the Pentateuch, which has been derived from modern writings.

"The treasures of oriental learning, which, of late years, have been collected with so much industry, and explained with so much judgment, supply abundance of incontrovertible evidence, for the existence of opinions in early ages of the world, which perfectly agree with leading articles of our faith, as well as with the principal events of Moses's history.

We find in Maurice's history and antiquities of India, that the names which are assigned by Moses to eastern countries and cities, as derived to them immediately from the patriarchs, their original founders, are, for the most part, the very names by which they were anciently known, over all the east: ma-

ny of them were afterwards translated, with little variation, by the Greeks, in their system of Geography.—In the tenth chapter of Genesis, Moses had traced to their original, all the inhabitants of the earth, from the Caspian and Persian seas, to the extreme Gades; and recorded at once the period, and the occasion of their dispersion.

This fact, and the conclusions from it which are thus incontrovertibly established, by the newly acquired knowledge of the Sanscrit language, were contended for, and strongly enforced, by Bochart and Stillingfleet; who could only refer to oriental opinions and traditions, as they came to them through the medium of Grecian interpretation.

To the late excellent and learned [x] president of the Asiatic society, we are chiefly indebted for the light thrown from the east upon this important subject. Avowing himself to be attached to no system, and as much disposed to reject the Mosiac history, if it were proved to be erroneous, as to believe it, if he found it confirmed by sound reasoning and satisfactory evidence, he engaged in these researches, to which his talents and situation were equally adapted; and the result of his laborious inquiries into the chronology, history, mythology,

x Sir William Jones.

and languages of the nations, whence infidels have derived their most formidable objections, was a full conviction, that neither accident nor ingenuity, could account for the very numerous instances of similar traditions, and of near coincidence in the names of persons, which are to be found in the bible, and in ancient monuments of eastern literature.

Whoever is acquainted with Maurice's history, and with the Asiatic researches, published at Calcutta, cannot but have observed that the accounts of the creation, the fall, the deluge, and the dispersion of mankind, recorded by the nations upon the vast continent of Asia, bear a strong resemblance to each other, and to the narration of the sacred history; and evidently contain the fragments of one original truth, which was broken by the dispersions of the patriarchal families, and corrupted by length of time, poetic fictions, and idolatry.

From this universal concurrence on this head, one of these things is necessarily true; either that all these traditions must have been taken from the author of Genesis, or that the author of the book of Genesis made up his history from some, or all such traditions as were already extant; or, lastly,

that he received his knowledge of past events from revelation. Were then all these traditions taken from the Mosiac history? It has been shown by Sir William Jones, and in Maurice's history, that they were received too generally, and too early to make this supposition even possible; for they existed in different parts of the world in the very age when Moses lived.

Should it become a question whether the Mosaic History was composed from the traditions then existing, it may be answered, that it is certain the Chaldeans, the Persians, the most ancient inhabitants of India, and the Egyptians, all possessed the same story; but, by the time of Moses, they had wrapped it up in their own mysteries, and disguised it by their own fanciful conceits. And surely, no rational mind can believe, that if Moses had been acquainted with all the mystic fables of the east, as well as of Egypt, he could, out of such an endless variety of obscure allegory, by the power of human sagacity alone, have discovered their real origin; much less that from a partial knowledge of them, he could have been able to discover the facts which suit and explain them all.

His plain recital however of the Creation, the fall, the deluge, and the dispersion of mankind, has unquestionably developed that origin, and

brings to light those facts; and it therefore follows, not only that his account is the true one, but there being no human means of his acquiring the knowledge of it, that it was, as he asserts it to have been, revealed to him by God himself [n].

These discoveries induce the compiler, to notice an observation which has been sometimes made upon classical education, that in reading Horace, and the works of the heathen poets, there was a danger of christian purity being corrupted, by heathenish impurity; but as we can now bring proof, that the false religion of heathens, was borrowed from the true religion of revelation, and is a witness to its authority, this ought to confirm us in the truth and prevent our being drawn into evil.

At the dispersion of Babel, every man would carry along with him some traditions of the Creation, of the origin of man, and of antediluvian events, as well as of the flood. These would be related with greater or less degrees of correctness and perspicuity, according to the information and memory of the persons who spoke of them; and, in those countries where hieroglyphical representation so much prevailed, we may conclude, that those who, from conjecture and imagination, could best fill up the blanks of intelligence, would be most regarded. This would naturally give rise to

abundance of invention, and to the picture being, in divers respects, much as the painter pleased, or as he thought would suit the taste of the times.

Bishop Warburton refers the origin of letters to the Egyptian hieroglyphics. He states, upon the authority of ancient writers, that, "throughout many of the early ages of the world, there was a regular gradation of improvement, in the manner of conveying ideas by signs; that pictures were first used as the representatives of thoughts; and, in process of time, that alphabetical characters were substituted, as an easier and more compendious mode of communication, than the vague use of arbitrary marks."

Moses, the great lawgiver of the Jews, brought letters, with the rest of his learning, from Egypt; and he simplified their forms, in order to prevent the abuse to which they would have been liable, as symbolic characters, among a people so much inclined to superstition as the Jews. From the Jews, this alphabetical mode of writing passed to the Syrians and Phœnicians, or was common to them at the same time.

The learned author of the Elements of General Knowledge, remarks: "By tracing the variety of languages and alphabets to one source, we simplify

subjects of curious inquiry; and we extricate ourselves from that perplexity in which we should be involved, if we rejected an opinion so conformable to reason, and which, the more accurate is our examination into ancient history, the more grounds we find to adopt. And it is a pleasing circumstance to observe, that while we maintain a system, supported by the most respectable profane authorities, we strengthen the argument in favour of the high antiquity of the Jewish language, and corroborate, with respect to its origin, the relations of the holy Scriptures.

"To fix the fleeting sounds, as soon as they are breathed from the lips, and to represent ideas faithfully to the eye, as soon as they are formed in the mind, by certain determinate characters, are the wonderful properties of letters. Those to whom books have from their childhood been familiar, and who view literature only in its present advanced state of improvement, cannot form a just estimate of the difficulties, that attended the first application of symbols or signs, to the expression of ideas.

"The picture of the Mexicans, and the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, were, without doubt, very ingenious devices; and mark the various ef-

forts, which human ingenuity can make towards expressing, by objects of sight, what passes in the mind. But it comes not within the province of the art of painting, to represent a succession of thoughts; and its operations are very tedious and circuitous; so that such a mode of information, is very ill adapted to the activity and the variety of mental exertions. The great excellence of letters consists in their simplicity: by a small number of characters, and variously combined, all words are expressed with precision and facility. They possess a decided advantage over all other artificial vehicles of thought, by communicating, with the utmost ease, the various conceptions of the mind."

Jones, of Nayland, says: "The heathens of Canaan, knew that there was a power which had wrought miracles for the people of God. The accounts of these extraordinary facts would go down to their posterity; and if they had not substituted some sorts of counterfeits of miracles, the credit of the false deities would not have been maintained. Miracles were the credentials of the doctrines of true religion. Those who professed that religion knew them to be true; because they had been eye witnesses of them. This their heathen enemies knew; and resolving not to be behind them, over-

acted their part, and multiplied their counterfeit miracles to such a degree, that they became fulsome and ridiculous. Their universal practice is then a demonstration of the truth of miracles; for nobody would say, that base money came into use before true money; that the shadow was made first, and the substance afterwards.

"Now what can the modern infidel say? The weight of the evidence, profane and sacred, for the existence of miracles, is so great on both sides, that between them he is crushed to death. If the philosopher Hume's arguments against miracles, were produced here, they would make a wretched figure. Though some christians have been enticed to listen to them, the Heathens themselves would have cast them out. This is a strong case, but it shows, that if we compare the enemies of God one with another, we shall perceive the inconsistency of their characters.—On the contrary, Truth being one, the friends of God are alike in all ages.

"Every one that reads Livy, or Homer, or Virgil, will see how universally miracles were admitted among the heathens. There is scarcely a sign or wonder recorded in the bible, but we find some imitation of it, in the histories which the heathens give of themselves, and of their gods.

"If then heathen books give this testimony to Divine revelation, we should use them for the best end they are capable of answering, and that is, the confirmation of our faith, and for the refutation of the arguments of infidels. The teachers of youth should occasionally give them such hints on these subjects, as would show the use to be made of them; that they may not apply their heathen learning, to the corrupting of Christianity.—The deplorable consequences of a departure in heart from the true God, should be pointed out to all school boys, as the apostle has displayed them in the first chapter to the Romans, which was intended as a warning against the corruptions of heathenism, and should never be forgotten."

But, to return to the subject we set out upon, it may be observed, that [n] the civil history of the Jews is seldom called in question, because we have under our eyes a people with such laws and institutions as Moses professes to have given them, and in a state exactly conformable to his predictions concerning them. As to the objections made to the miraculous parts, we will oppose to them the conclusive arguments of a professed enemy to revealed religion[x]: "The miraculous parts of the Mo-

x Lord Bolingbroke.

saic history, are not, like the prodigies of Livy, and other profane writers, unconnected with the facts recorded; they are so interwoven with the narrative, that they must both stand or fall together."

We will now ask, Is it credible, that any people would have submitted to so rigorous and burdensome a law as that of Moses, unless they had been fully convinced, by a series of miracles, that he was a prophet sent from God? And being thus convinced of the Divine mission of Moses, would they have suffered any writing to pass under his venerated name, of which he was not really the author? Had fraud, or imposture of any kind, belonged to any part of it, would not the Israelites, at the time of rebellion and sedition, have availed themselves of that circumstance to justify their disobedience?

The Jews were exceedingly prone to transgress the law of Moses, and to fall into idolatry; but if there had been any, the least suspicion of any falsity or imposture in the writings of Moses, the disaffected among the people, would have sufficiently promulgated it, as the most plausible plea to draw them off from the worship of the true God. Could any, the least suspicion, have been raised among them concerning the authenticity of the fundamental records of the Jewish Commonwealth, what a fine plea it would have been for Jeroboam's golden

calves in Bethel and Dan; and for the Samaritan Temple in mount Gerizim!

The first submission to such a law as that of Moses must have been while all the tremendous circumstances of its promulgation, were fresh upon their minds; and indeed the nature and design of its institution, demanded that it should be carried into immediate effect. And, could the Israelites have continued any length of time, in the observance of all those numerous regulations, civil and religious, without a written authority to refer to? Is there any instance of this sort, even in the history of the most civilized parts of mankind, of a legislator requiring obedience to laws orally delivered, without committing them to writing, to be a criterion, by which disputes were to be decided, and offenders punished?

Moses not only required obedience to his laws, but he ordered that no alteration should be made in them: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." Now we know, that the Israelites would sooner part with their lives and property, than admit any variation or alteration of their law.—The laws of Moses are incorporated with the very republic of the Jews, and their subsistence and go-

vernment depend upon them; their religion and laws are so interwoven one with another, that one cannot be broken off from the other. Their right to their temporal possessions in the land of Canaan, depended on their owning the sovereignty of God, who had promised them to the patriarchs, and who had enacted the laws respecting them; by which we may see how those events were linked together.

It has now surely been sufficiently proved, that the writings under the name of Moses, were undoubtedly his; for none who acknowledge the laws to have been his, can have the face to deny his history; there being so necessary a connexion between them; and the book of Genesis, being nothing else but a general introduction to that which follows.

But we may add, that the genuineness of the Pentateuch, was never called in question by any of the numerous writers against the Gospel, during the first four centuries; although the christian fathers, constantly appealed to the history of the prophecies of the Old Testsment, in support of the Divine origin of the doctrines which they taught.

Whatever difference of opinion there may be, concerning the direct inspiration of any historical narrative, or of any moral precept, contained in the Old Testament, we must be

fully convinced that the prophetical parts proceeded from God. This is continually affirmed by the prophets themselves, and is demonstrated by the indubitable testimony which history bears, to the accurate fulfilment of many of these predictions; and others are gradually receiving their accomplishment, in the times in which we live, and afford the surest pledge, and most positive security, for the completion of those which remain to be fulfilled. The past, the present, and the future, have a connected reference to one great plan, which Infinite Wisdom, Prescience, and Power, could alone form, reveal, and execute[a].

Every succeeding age throws greater light upon the sacred writings, and contributes additional evidence of their Divine origin. We need only add, that Christ himself confirmed every part of the Pentateuch, when he said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."—The genuineness of the original records being thus established, we have only to see whether the translations of them into our own language may be depended upon.

[n] Though designed corruption was never suspected, yet the carelessness and inadvertence of transcribers, in a long series of years, would undoubtedly introduce some errors and mistakes. Great pains have been taken, by learned men, to collate the remaining manuscripts of the Hebrew bible; and the result has been satisfactory in the highest degree. Many various readings, of a trivial kind, have been discovered; but these differences are of so little moment, that it is sometimes absurdly objected to the laborious work of Dr. Kennicot, which contains the collations of nearly 700 Hebrew manuscripts, that it does not enable us to correct a single important passage in the Old Testament. From this circumstance, we have in fact derived the greatest advantage which could have been wished for, by any real friend of revealed religion; namely, the certain knowledge of the agreement of the copies of the ancient Scriptures, now extant in their original language, with each other, and with our bibles.

This point thus clearly established, is still further confirmed, by the general coincidence of the present Hebrew copies with all the *early* translations of the bible; and particularly with the Septuagint Version, the earliest of them all, and which was made 270 years before Christ.

There is also a perfect agreement between the Samaritan, and Hebrew Pentateuchs, except in one or two manifest interpolations, which were noticed immediately by the Jewish writers; and this is no small proof of the genuineness of both, as we may rest assured, that the Jews and Samaritans, on account of their rooted enmity to each other, would never have concurred in any alteration.

Nor ought it to be omitted, that the Chaldee paraphrases, which are very ancient, and so concise that they may be called translations, entirely accord with our Hebrew bible[n].

Those who have compared most of the European translations with the Original, have not scrupled to say, that the English translation of the bible, made under the direction of King James the first, is the most accurate and faithful of the whole.

We have the concurring testimony of that distinguished biblical scholar, Adam Clarke, who cites the following expression of a learned friend, respecting this version: "The Original from which it is taken, is, alone, superior to the bible translated by the direction of King James;" and he then *declares;* "This is an opinion, in which my heart, my judgment, and my conscience coincide."

CHAPTER XXVI.

PROPHECIES OF MOSES CONCERNING THE JEWS.

THE twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, from the forty-eighth to the last verse, contains a series of predictions, the truth of which is attested by the history of the Jews, from their first settlement in Canaan to this very day. We shall show the connexion they had with succeeding prophecies, as well as point out the fulfilment of them.

Moses is larger in recounting the curses, than the blessings, as if he had a prescience of the people's disobedience; and foresaw that a larger portion and longer continuance of the evil, than of the good, would befal them.

We will begin with the forty-ninth verse:

"*The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young.*"

The prophet Jeremiah uses nearly the same language in chapter the 5th, and verse 15th: "*Lo!*

I will bring a nation upon you from far, Oh house of Israel! saith the Lord; it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say." He compares them in like manner to eagles, *Lam.* iv, verse 19, viz. "*our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of Heaven,*" &c.

Some writers have applied these prophecies to the Chaldeans; but this description is applicable with the greatest propriety to the Romans. They were truly brought from far, from the end of the earth: Vespasian and Adrian, the two great Emperors, and destroyers of the Jews, both came from commanding here in Britain. The Romans too, from the rapidity of their conquests, might very well be compared to eagles; and perhaps not without an allusion to the standard of the Roman army, which was an eagle; and their language was unknown.

Their enemies were also to take their cities:

"*And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst throughout thy land.*" Deut. xxviii. 52.

We see in 2nd Kings xviii. 13, that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

And Nebuchadnezzar and his captain took and spoiled Jerusalem, burnt the city and temple, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

So likewise the Romans, as we may read in Josephus's history of the Jewish wars, demolished several fortified places, before they besieged and destroyed Jerusalem. And the Jews may truly be said to have trusted in their high and fenced walls; for they seldom ventured a battle in the open field. They confided in the strength, and situation of Jerusalem, as the Jebusites, the former inhabitants of the place, had done before them; insomuch that they said: "Who shall come down against us, or who shall enter into our habitation?" Jerusalem was indeed a very strong place, and wonderfully fortified, both by nature and by art, according to the description of Tacitus, as well as of Josephus; and yet how many times was it taken. It was taken by Shishak, king of Egypt, by Nebuchadnezzar, by Antiochus Epiphanes, by Pompey, by Sosius, and by Herod, before its final destruction by Titus.

In these sieges they were to suffer much, and especially from famine:

"*In the straitness wherewith their enemies should distress them.*" verse 53.

And accordingly Samaria was besieged till an ass's head was sold for four-score pieces of silver; and in the last siege of Jerusalem, by Titus, there was a most terrible famine in the city. Josephus has given so melancholy an account of it, that we cannot read it without shuddering.

He says, the women snatched the food out of the mouths of their husbands, and even from their infants. So literally were the words of Moses fulfilled:

"*The man's eye shall be evil towards his brother, and towards the wife of his bosom, and towards his children; because he hath nothing left him in the siege,*" &c. verse 54.

Nay it was expressly foretold, that not only the men, but the women should eat their own children.

Moses predicted the same thing, *Levit.* xxvi. 29:

"*Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons; and the flesh of your daughters, shall ye eat.*"

And in *Deut.* xxviii. 56:

"*The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness, she shall eat her children, for want of all things, secretly, in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in thy gates.*"

And it was fulfilled about 600 years after the time of Moses, when Samaria was besieged by the king of Assyria; when two women agreed to boil and eat their own sons. *II Kings*, vi. 28, 29.

It was again fulfilled 900 years after the time of Moses, in the siege of Jerusalem, before the Babylonish captivity; and Baruch thus expresses it: "The Lord hath made good his word which he pronounced against us, to bring upon us great plagues, such as never happened under the whole heaven, as it came to pass in Jerusalem; according to the things which were written in the law of Moses, that a man should eat the flesh of his own son, and the flesh of his own daughter."

And again it was fulfilled 1500 years after the time of Moses, in the last siege of Jerusalem, by Titus. And we read, in Josephus particularly, of a noble woman killing and eating her own child. One would have thought such horror and distress transcended imagination, much less that any person could have foreseen and foretold it; but it was literally fulfilled at different times, and at distant periods.

"*And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven, for multitude.*" Deut. xxviii. 62.

Josephus computes the number destroyed by famine and the siege, to be 1,100,000, besides 99,209 made prisoners; the people being assembled from all parts to celebrate the passover. Indeed there is not a nation upon the earth that hath been exposed to so many massacres and persecutions.

Verse 68th: "*And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships; and there shall ye be sold unto your enemies, for bondmen and bond women.*"

It appears from Josephus, that when Jerusalem was taken by Titus, of the captives who were above seventeen years of age, he sent many bound to the works in Egypt. Those under that age were sold; but so little care was taken of these captives, that 11,000 of them perished for want.—And we learn from Jerome, that after the last overthrow, by Adrian, many thousands of them were sold, and those who could not be sold, were transported into Egypt, and perished by shipwreck, by famine, or were massacred by the inhabitants.

Verse 63: "*And ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.*"

They were plucked off their own land, when the ten tribes were carried into captivity by the king of Assyria, and when the other two tribes were carried away to Babylon, and other nations plant-

ed in their stead; and when the Romans took away their place and nation. And, afterwards, when the emperor Adrian, had subdued the rebellious Jews, he published an edict forbidding them on pain of death, to set foot in Jerusalem, or even to approach the country round about it.—From that time to this, their country hath been in the possession of foreign lords and masters; few of the Jews dwelling in it, and those only of a low servile condition.

But they were not only to be plucked from off their own land, but dispersed into all nations.

Verse 64: "*And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth unto the other.*"

This hath been amply fulfilled since the great dispersion of the Jews by the Romams. What people indeed have been scattered so far and wide? They swarm in many parts of the east, are spread through most of the countries of Europe and Africa; and there are families of them in the West Indies.—They circulate through all parts where trade and money circulate.

But though they should be so dispersed, yet they should not be totally destroyed, but still subsist as a distinct people, as Moses foretold:

Levit. xxvi. 44: "*And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them.*"

What a marvellous thing it is, that after so many wars, battles, and sieges; after so many fires, famines, and pestilences; after so many rebellions, massacres, and persecutions; after so many years of captivity, they are not destroyed utterly; and, though scattered among all nations, that they yet subsist as a distinct people!—Where is any thing comparable to this to be found in all the histories, and in all the nations under the sun?

Deut. xxviii. verse 65: "*And among these nations shalt thou find no ease; neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest.*"

They have been so far from finding rest, that they have been banished from city to city, and from country to country.—We shall only mention their banishments in modern times. In the latter end of the 13th century, they were banished from England, by Edward the first; and were not permitted to return and settle, till Oliver Cromwell's time. In the 14th century they were banished from France, the seventh time, by Charles the sixth.—In the 15th century they were banished from Spain, by Ferdinand and Isabella, when,

according to Mariana, 170,000 families left the kingdom. Most of them paid dearly to John the second, for a refuge in Portugal; but in a few years, were expelled thence by his successor Emanuel. And it is not many years since they were banished from Prague, by the queen of Bohemia.

Verse 29, 31, 33: "*They should be oppressed and spoiled evermore; and their houses and vineyards, their oxen and asses, should be taken from them; and they should be only oppressed and crushed alway.*"

What frequent seizures have been made of their effects in almost all countries, instances of which are innumerable!—Daniel Rennels, vol. I. p. 79. says: "Henry III. always polled the Jews at every low ebb of his fortunes. One Abraham was forced to pay 700 marks for his redemption; Aaron, another Jew, protested that the king had taken from him, at times, 30,000 marks of silver, besides 200 marks of gold, which he had presented to the queen. And, in like manner, he used many other Jews. And when they were banished, in the reign of Edward I. their estates were confiscated, and immense sums thereby accrued to the crown.

Verse 32. "*Their sons and their daughters should be given unto another people.*"

And in several countries, in Spain and Portugal particularly, their children have been taken from them by order of the government, to be educated in the popish religion. The fourth council of Toledo ordered, that all their children should be taken from them, for fear they should partake of their errors; and that they should be shut up in monasteries, to be instructed in christian truths.

Verse 34. "*They should be mad for the sight of their eyes which they should see.*"

And into what madness, fury, and desperation, have they been pushed by the cruel usage, extortions, and oppressions, which they have undergone. We will allege only two similar instances, one from ancient, and one from modern history. After the destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus, some of the worst of the Jews took refuge in the castle of Masada, where, being closely besieged by the Romans, they, at the persuasion of Eleazar, their leader, first murdered their wives and their children; then ten men were chosen by lot, to slay all the rest; this being done, one of the ten was chosen in like manner, to kill the other nine; which having executed, he set fire to the place, and stabbed himself. There were 960 who perished in this manner;

only two women and five boys escaped, by hiding themselves in the aqueducts under ground.

Such another instance we have in our English history; for in the reign of Richard I. when the people were in arms to make massacre of them, 1500 of them seized on the city of York, to defend themselves; but, being besieged, they offered to capitulate, and to ransom their lives with money. The offer being refused, one of them cried in despair, that it was better to die courageously for the law, than to fall into the hands of the Christians. Every one immediately took his knife, and stabbed his wife and children. The men afterwards retired into the king's palace, which they set on fire, in which they consumed themselves, with the palace and furniture.

Verses 36 and 64. "*They should serve other gods, wood and stone; they should serve other gods, which neither they, nor their fathers had known, even wood and stone.*"

This hath been most remarkably fulfilled in the popish countries, where the Jews bow down to stocks and stones, rather than their effects should be confiscated.

"The Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions," saith Basnage, book 7, chap. 33, "reduced them

to the dilemma of becoming hypocrites, or of being burnt. The number of these dissemblers is very considerable, and it is not to be concluded that there are no Jews in Spain and Portugal, because they are not known. They are so much the more dangerous for being not only very numerous, but confounded with the ecclesiastics, and for entering into all ecclesiastical dignities."

Verse 37: "*They should become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations.*"

And do we not hear and see this prophecy fulfilled almost every day? Are not the avarice, usury, and hard heartedness of a Jew, proverbial? And are not their persons generally odious among all sorts of people? Mahomedans, heathens, and christians, however they may disagree in other points, yet generally agree in vilifying, abusing, and persecuting the Jews. In most places where they are tolerated, they are obliged to live in a separate quarter by themselves; as they did here in the old Jewry. Their very countenances commonly distinguish them from the rest of mankind.

Verse 50: "*Their plagues should be wonderful, even great plagues, and of long continuance.*"

And have not their plagues continued now these 1800 years? Their former captivities were very

short in comparison. And Ezekial and Daniel prophesied in the land of the Chaldeans; but now they have no true prophet to foretel an end of their calamity. In their former captivities, they had the comfort of being conveyed to the same place; they dwelt together in the land of Goshen; they were carried together to Babylon; but now they are dispersed all over the face of the earth. What nation hath suffered so much, and yet endured so long? What nation hath subsisted as a distinct people in their own country, so long as these have done in their dispersion into all countries? And what a standing miracle is this, exhibited to the view and observation of the whole world!

Here are instances of prophecies, of prophecies delivered above 3000 years ago, and yet, as we see, fulfilling in the world at this very time.

What stronger proofs can we desire of the Divine legation of Moses? Here are instances which not only convince, but amaze and astonish, beyond expression. The Jews are truly, as Moses foretold they would be, "*a sign and a wonder forever.*"

Newton on the Prophecies.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES.

WE have seen that Joshua attended on Moses as his minister, and accompanied him into the mount when he ascended to meet God, and therefore was not implicated in the idolatry of the golden calf, which Aaron fabricated during their absence. He had traversed the land of Canaan as one of the spies, had brought up its good report, and stood firm with Caleb, in resisting the timid, discouraging representations of their colleagues.

He was a person of singular piety, undaunted resolution, and unshaken fidelity. But though Joshua possessed all the qualities, natural and acquired, which were requisite for the discharge of the important trust to which he was appointed; yet it was enjoined upon him, "to stand before Eleazer the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall

come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation of God."

We have seen before, that Joshua, like a servant, was confined to a lower region of the mount, whilst Moses went up to the summit, and was admitted within the dark vail. So now, Joshua being referred to a secondary means for instruction, his inferiority to Moses is pointed out, and the testimony confirmed: "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

[k] It may be observed respecting Urim, that it generally, in scripture, is found in connexion with Thummim; both are terms which import light and perfection. They appear to have been an essential article of the high priest's dress. They were not, as it is alleged, the production of human skill, like the other particulars of his clothing, for there is no account of their fabrication by the hands of man; but when the breast plate was finished, Moses put into it the Urim and the Thummim, and, as is apprehended, immediately from God[k]. And we cannot conceive, that prophetical qualifications, in any age of the world, could be derived from any other source than that Light which is divine, and that Wisdom which is perfect. But, as

the apostle asserts: "Prophecy came not of old time by the will of man, but holy men of God, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." *II Peter*, 1, 21.

[s] Joshua, having received from the Almighty a promise of unfailing support [x], and a grant, in behalf of the Israelites, of the whole region extending from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and from the mountains of Lebanon on the north, to the wilderness of Sin on the south [y], prepared to put the twelve tribes into possession of their inheritance. The hand of God was stretched out to aid him. The river Jordan, at that time overflowing, like the Nile, with its annual inundation, its waters were miraculously parted asunder, to afford a passage, on dry ground, to the host. The walls of Jericho fell to the earth.

The extirpation of the Canaanites was gradual; that the beasts of the field might not have time to multiply and overspread the land [z]. But before the death of Joshua, the country, though a considerable portion remained to be subdued, was

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x Joshua, i. 5.

y Josh. i. 4. See also Numb. xxxiv. 3. Deuter. xi. 24; and Gen. xv. 18.

z Deut. vii. 22.

divided by lot, according to the command of God, among the tribes; with the exception of that of Levi, and of those who had already received, at their own request, their inheritance in the conquered kingdoms of the Amorites, on the other side of Jordan.

The Levites were provided with cities for the residence of their families; and with an ample subsistence from the sacrifices and tithes of other tribes, on whose behalf, as well as on their own, they were to minister at the altar.

The command which God had given to Israel respecting the Canaanites, was, that they should be exterminated: "Of the cities of these people which the Lord thy God doth give thee for thine inheritance, thou shalt save nothing alive that breatheth." The reason of this injunction is immediately subjoined: "Thou shalt utterly destroy them, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that they teach you not to do after all their abominations." *Deut.* xx. 16.

Persons who seem to have conceived, that to cavil at the bible is a mark of discernment, have eagerly seized upon this passage; and have represented it as containing a sanguinary edict, unworthy of a merciful governor of the universe. Our faith

however in the truth of Scripture, is founded on too many irrefragable arguments, to be staggered by such an objection as this. The command is fully justified, even to human apprehension, by the reason which God himself assigned for it.

We know that the Canaanites, in their gross and bloody idol worship, a worship celebrated with the sacrifice of their own children; and in the universal and unbridled profligacy of their manners, had abandoned themselves to such shameless and detestable wickedness, that, in the emphatical language of holy writ, the land itself abhorred and vomited out her inhabitants[x]. We know the obstinate propensity of the Israelites to forsake their Supreme Benefactor, and to pollute themselves with idolatry and all its attendant abominations. We know too, that when they disobeyed the injunction to extirpate all the nations which dwelt in Canaan, and contented themselves with subjecting some of them to tribute; those Canaanites who were thus permitted to remain, proved thorns and snares to the people of Israel; grievous as enemies, corrupting as friends, and ultimately the cause of their ruin; according to the previous

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x Lev. xviii. 24, 25, &c. Deut. xii. 31.

warnings delivered from God himself, by the mouth of Moses and of Joshua[y].

The destruction of the Canaanites, therefore, was fully deserved by their crimes, and was requisite to preserve Israel from being drawn by them, or by their posterity, into the same crimes. The latter circumstance explains the reason why even the young children of the people of Canaan, were included in the sentence of extirpation: and "*justifies the ways of God to man*," in an instance which has been alleged as contrary to all ideas of the Divine rectitude, by objectors, who seem to have forgotten, that in earthquakes also, and in famines, and in pestilences, the Deity sees fit to let unoffending infancy be involved in the common desolation[x]; and that a future life affords ample scope for the complete discrimination between innocence and guilt.

The employment of the Israelites as ministers to execute the Divine vengeance, was calculated to impress them, with a deep conviction of the enormity of the sins of their predecessors in the land; and with an awful recollection that the same punishment was already denounced against them-

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y Numb. xxxiii. 55, 56. Josh. xxiii. 13. Judg ii. 3.

x See Bishop Watson's apology for the Bible, 3d edit. p. 14, &c

selves, if they should fall into similar transgressions.

[n] It is a curious example of the inconsistency of sceptical arguments, that the destruction of the inhabitants of a small part of the earth, is pronounced to be incompatible with Divine Attributes, while the destruction of the whole world, by a deluge, is passed by without any comment[n]. But the deluge is a fact authenticated by such a variety of proofs, and so universally acknowledged, in all nations and countries, that its consistency with the justice of God must be allowed, or his moral government must at once be denied. And yet, in reality, the general destruction of the human race by a deluge, and the partial extermination of the inhabitants of Canaan by the Israelites, are to be accounted for precisely upon the same principle. In both cases, it was the enormous wickedness of the people, which drew upon them such signal punishments.

We have seen, that when the land of Canaan was first promised to the seed of Abraham, it was expressly declared, that they were not to take possession of it, until the fourth generation after they should remove into Egypt; and the reason assigned was: "Because the iniquity of the Amo-

rites is not yet full." It therefore appears, that the comparative righteousness of one nation, postponed the destruction of several others, for more than 400 years: and that it was not till the measure of wickedness was completed, that they were destroyed by the outstretched arm of the Almighty, who led on his chosen people, and commanded them to execute his judgments upon those incorrigibly wicked nations; which judgments were designed at the same time to be a warning to Israel. And thus, this command, so far from being repugnant to the attributes of Jehovah, affords an example of his mercy and forbearance, and establishes, rather than invalidates, the truth of the Pentateuch, and its claim to Divine authority.

[s] Joshua, now far advanced in years, assembled the twelve tribes of Israel to hear his last instructions. He recounted the wonders which God had wrought for them in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan, notwithstanding their many provocations; pointed out the punctual accomplishment of every one of the Divine promises; and, having declared beforehand the steadfast determination of himself and his family, to remain faithful servants of the Lord, received from the whole congregation a similar assurance, repeated

in the most solemn terms. He then dismissed the people, every man to his inheritance [a].

Joshua, the son of Nun, having been trained up from his youth in the service of Moses, and in communion with God, was prepared to act a conspicuous and important part in the history of Israel. He entered with Moses into the tabernacle when it was removed out of the camp, and the glory of the Lord overshadowed it; and continued there until Moses returned to confer with the people. He had also been with him on the mount, when he went to receive the written law. Hunter asks: "Was ever spot of this earthly ball so highly honoured as that barren mountain, in the midst of a desert?" Persons, not places, possess dignity. The presence of God confers greatness and importance; he can receive none from created, much less from artificial pomp and magnificence. The great God "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." The heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him; but "thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high, and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

[k] The curiosity of travellers has been excited to visit this scene of wonders. But is there not an intentional obscurity spread over the description, to baffle idle curiosity, and to call us to the spirit and intention of the dispensation, not to the external apparatus of it?—Wherever there is a principle of conscience, wherever there is common reason and understanding, there is the law, there is Sinai, there is God.

The characters of Moses and of Joshua delightfully illustrate each other. Moses knew from the beginning, that Joshua was to be his successor in office; was to finish the work which he had begun; was to have the glory of conquering Canaan, and of establishing Israel there according to the promises. An ordinary mind would have marked the progress of this growing rival with jealousy; would have attempted to obstruct his advancement; would have repined at the preference given him, to the neglect of his own family. But every selfish, every domestic consideration gives way to the rising merits of Joshua, and to the choice and appointment of heaven.

It was equally natural, on the other hand, for a young man like Joshua, who knew that he was designed to rule, to surpass his master, to reach

the highest summit of human grandeur; it was natural for such a one to become impatient of authority, to be weary of restraint, to be eager to bring himself forward, and make himself conspicuous; but the son of Nun discovers true magnanimity, in cheerfully yielding the subjection of an inferior, in observing Moses, and learning of him; and in patiently waiting for the time and manner which Providence should choose for exalting him to honour. Moses treats him, and speaks of him, as of a favourite son rising into eminence and distinction; he behaves to Moses as to a beloved parent, crowned with years and honour, which he hopes to see him long enjoy. These are lessons not taught in the school of the world, where natural affection, decency, and discretion, are daily sacrificed on the altar of pride, selfishness, avarice, and ambition.

A little knowledge puffeth up; but modesty and humility are generally the attendants of profound wisdom. Thoughtless men make light of the name, the honour, the worship of God; but angels cover their faces with their wings, when they approach His awful presence.

The book of Joshua comprehends the history of about thirty years; it contains an account of the conquest and division of the land of Canaan; the

renewal of the covenant with the Israelites, and the death of Joshua. In the last chapter, it is said, that Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, which expressions seem to imply, that he subjoined this history to that written by Moses. The five last verses, giving an account of the death of Joshua, were added by one of his successors, probably by Eleazar, Phineas, or Samuel.

In one of these verses we are informed, "that Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel." And "Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance." "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for a hundred pieces of silver."

[n] It does not appear that any person was at first appointed to succeed Joshua, in the general command and government of the Israelites; but, acting in separate tribes, each having a head or governor called in scripture, "the princes of the people,"

they proceeded in the conquest of the remaining part of the country, and were, for a few years, faithful to the service of God. Afterwards, in opposition to the Divine commands delivered by Moses and Joshua, they suffered the ancient inhabitants of Canaan to remain tributary among them, and were seduced to join them in the idolatrous worship of their false gods[n].

"And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies." Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed. But when they cried unto the Lord, he raised them up Judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. A more ruinous situation can scarcely be described, than that of the Israelites when the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin, the king of Canaan, the captain of whose host was Sisera.

[k] As the history of their deliverance, exhibits a new thing in the annals of human nature, we shall present our readers with the outlines of it. It as-

serts the sovereignty of the Most High over all persons and events; places the female character in a new, striking, and important point of view; and thereby admonishes the one sex to think of their own natural, general superiority, with deference, affection, and honour to the excellencies of the female mind, when cultivated by a proper education, directed to a worthy object, and called into exertion by a great and worthy occasion.

Hitherto we have seen wise and good women in the retired vale of domestic life, their proper and peculiar sphere. But we are now to contemplate feminine ardour under the influence of prophetic inspiration, and united with the dignity of the judgment seat. Hitherto we have seen only holy men of God, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: but the Most High is no respecter of persons, or of sexes: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and He will show unto them his covenant."

When the Lord sold the Israelites into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who had nine hundred chariots of iron, they were mightily oppressed for twenty years. Hope seemed extinguished in Israel. Not one man appears to be awakened to a sense of his country's wrongs; but public spirit,

smothered in each *manly* breast, glows in a *female* bosom; and the tribunal of judgment, deserted by masculine virtue and ability, is honourably filled by the discernment and zeal of Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth.

Of the simple dignity of her unadorned, unassuming state, we have a beautiful representation. She dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel, in mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came to her for judgment. Her canopy of state was the shade of the palm tree; her rule of judgment the law and testimony of the living God; her motive the inspiration of the Almighty; her aim and end, his glory, and the good of his people; her reward the testimony of a good conscience.—What, compared to these, are the ermined robe, the ivory sceptre, the chair of state, the glittering diadem[k]!

We find that she directed only ten thousand men to go with Barak, against the mighty host of Canaan. This was by Divine appointment, that the glory of all, in the issue, might be ascribed solely to the Lord of Hosts. The mighty hand of the outstretched arm of Jehovah, once more setteth his people free. It is evident from some expressions in the song of Deborah, that the defeat wa

in part, at least, miraculous: "They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Josephus affirms that an extraordinary storm of rain, mingled with hail, blinded the eyes of the Canaanites. This will account for the waters swelling and raging, the ancient river Kishon rising suddenly and sweeping away their enemies.

Sisera, the captain of this mighty host of Jabin, had escaped from his chariot, and fled on foot; but he falls into a snare. Heber the Kenite, in whose house he took refuge, was at peace with the king of Canaan, but then he was of the children of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, who had accompanied the Israelites in the wilderness, and came up with Judah from the city of palm trees; that we may conclude he would feel an interest in their success. Had not this appeared, and some other circumstances to which we shall advert, we should have been at a loss to conceive what could impel Jael, the wife of Heber, to commit such a deed of horror, as the destruction of a person, who, weary and exhausted, had taken refuge in her tent. But the conclusion of this sacred poem accounts for her conduct, and for the warmth of the strains with which this act was celebrated.

The wretched females of the vanquished people

usually became a prey to the brutal lust of the victors. [k]This was a case so common, that the mother of Sisera, and her wise ladies, are represented as so lost to female delicacy and compassion, as to exult at the idea of assigning the virgins of Israel to Sisera and his soldiers, as mere instruments of a brutal pleasure: "The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice: Why is his chariot so long a coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots? Her wise ladies answered her, yea she returned answer to herself, Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey, to every man a damsel or two? To Sisera a prey of divers colours, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?"

May we not suppose both Jael and Deborah, animated with righteous indignation against the intended violaters of their sex? Our pity for the fallen warrior, and his inglorious end, must of course abate, when we consider that a just and merciful Providence, stopped a career which threatened the lives, the virtue and the happiness of thousands. The victory was complete; the enemy was totally routed, and put to the sword. The commander-in-chief, alone, escaped the carnage of the field; and he, who a little before had nine

hundred chariots of iron at his disposal, sees himself stripped of all, and constrained to consult his safety by flight. He, who in the morning advanced to the unequal combat at the head of a mighty host, is in the evening a bleeding corpse, fallen ingloriously by the hands of a woman.

The tongue of Deborah, like the pen of a ready writer, dictates acceptable words to the thousands of Israel. She cannot think of repose, till the evening sacrifice of praise be offered up. From the confused noise of the warriors and garments rolled in blood, she turns to acknowledge the wonders of that Right Hand, and Holy Arm, which hath gotten them the victory. What an occasion to Israel of prostration of soul, that He, who of old had revealed his fiery law, should have come, on this occasion, on the wings of the wind for their salvation[x]!

What a melancholy picture of the ruined state of Israel, previously to this deliverance, does the song of Deborah bring to our view!—"In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the traveller walked through by-ways.—The inhabitants

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x Judges v, 6.

of the villages ceased: they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel[x]."

By means of oppression, it appears that all intercourse was interrupted; commerce of course must have been nearly extinct; life and property insecure, and every thing dear to man, at the mercy of a haughty tyrant, and exposed to the ravages of a lawless band of armed ruffians.

This low, dejected condition, is strikingly portrayed in their skulking from place to place, stealing through by-ways to carry on a precarious and scanty traffic, suffering much, and fearing more.

[x]The poetical question of Deborah, "Was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?" shows that the insulting foe had undermined all their hope for the time to come, by stripping them of every kind of armour, both for defence and attack.

By this view of their abject and deplorable state, we see the occasion for the triumphant language of, "Awake, Deborah, awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam. Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles of

the people. The Lord made me have dominion over the mighty." It was not the strength of Israel, which God employed in crushing the nobles and pride of Canaan; it was not by opposing force to force, that Providence decided the contest; but by a dispirited handful, by a scattered and broken remainder, who out of weakness were made strong[k], and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

The only other reference necessary for us to make to the conduct of the Judges, relates to some part of the account given in scripture of Sampson, and, first, of the foxes which he employed to destroy the corn of his enemies, the Philistines.

Some persons have considered it a ludicrous and improbable description, and that the means were not adequate to the purpose. Bryant, the author of "Observations upon some Passages of Scripture" says: "It is idle to object to this; as there could not be a more effectual method to hurt the enemy, than that which was here used; for the foxes, drawing different ways, were undoubtedly impeded in their course, which must have given time for the fire to take effect. There is reason to think that there was nothing new or uncommon in this operation, as it was the most obvious for

the end proposed, that the wit of man could devise." We accordingly find that Ovid alludes to the practice, and mentions that foxes with fire-brands, were every year exhibited at Rome, and killed in the circus.

It was the custom in many places to sacrifice, by way of retaliation, every animal, even goat or swine, which did particular damage to the fruits of the earth. In consequence of this, the foxes appropriated to that purpose were introduced with fire-brands. On this account, the whole race, according to the Poet, were condemned at the festival called Cerealia, to be in their turns set on fire. It is alluded to more than once by Lycophron, and seems to have been well known in Greece. He makes Cassandra represent Ulysses, as a man both of cunning and mischief, and styles him very properly λαμπουρις a fox with a fire brand at his tail; for wherever he went mischief followed.

Suidas also takes notice of this custom; hence we may conclude that this process was common in different countries. Johannes Rosinus informs us, that the celebration at Rome was upon the 15th of April, when the foxes were doomed to atone for the ruin of the corn.

That there were foxes in Judea, is plain from

the words of our Saviour: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests." Hasselquist says, these animals abound this day in Bethlehem, and the ancient Palestine, of which he was an eye witness. p. 211.

There was nothing, of old, deemed strange or incredible in this account of the Jewish chief. The process appears to have been well known in other nations, as we may be assured from the many allusions to it; and the whole is well attested. Hence all the idle objections to this history are made void, to the confirmation of the truths in scripture, and to the satisfaction of all well disposed christians.

The judges appear to have been twelve in number; and their government continued more than 300 years.

In the time of Eli, the last judge but one, the ark was taken by the hands of the Philistines, but was miraculously preserved from injury; and, after seven months, was brought back to the Israelites, who might have been taught, by this temporary deprivation of their glory, the great advantage of adhering to the terms of the Divine covenant.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PROPHETS.

BEFORE we enter upon a description of the fulfilment of prophecies, we shall employ one chapter in a short sketch of the books of the Old Testament, subsequent to that of Joshua. The latter part of the book of Judges, and the whole book of Ruth, may be considered as digressions; but both are confirmed by references made to them in the New Testament.

The general thread of the sacred history, is resumed in the first book of Samuel, which completes the government of the Judges; and it relates the choice and rejection of Saul, the first king of the Israelites, and the anointing of David in his stead; with a most interesting account of the early part of the life of David, and of the reign and death of Saul. The history of David is continued in the second book of Samuel; and both together give an account of the Israelites, during a period of about one hundred and fifty years.

It is expressly declared in the first book of Chronicles, that Samuel recorded, together with Nathan and Gad, the actions of David. Several very noble prophecies are contained in these books. Our Saviour refers pointedly to the first book when vindicating, on a particular occasion, the conduct of his disciples[x].

The two books of Kings, which form only one book in the Hebrew canon, continue the history during nearly 430 years, to the Babylonian captivity. The prevailing opinion is, that they were compiled by Ezra, from the larger accounts of the acts of the kings of Israel and Judah, which were written by Nathan, Gad, and Ahijah, and the succeeding Prophets. In these books, many striking predictions are contained; and each of them is authoritatively cited by our Saviour[y].

The two books of Chronicles, originally regarded as one by the Jews, recapitulate the Jewish history, from the accession of Solomon to the return from the Babylonian captivity, being a period of 480 years. They confirm, by their agreement, the historical books of the scriptures already noticed, with the addition of various genealogical tables, and

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x Matt. xii. 3, 4. y Matt. xii. 42.

many particulars not noticed in the other historical books of scripture. They contain occasional predictions, and have received undoubted sanction, by being quoted in the New Testament[s].

[n] Ezra, the author of the book which bears his name, was of the sacerdotal family, being a direct descendant from Aaron; and succeeded Zerubbabel in the government of Judea. He relates the transactions of 79 years, commencing from the edict of Cyrus. The book is written in Chaldee from the 8th verse of the 4th chapter, to the 27th verse of the 7th chapter. It is probable, that the sacred historian used the Chaldaic language in this part of his work, because it contains chiefly letters and decrees written in that language, the original words of which he might think it right to record; and indeed the people, who were recently returned from the Babylonian captivity, were at least as familiar with the Chaldee, as they were with the Hebrew tongue.

Nehemiah professeth to be the author of the book which bears his name, and he uniformly writes in the first person. He was of the tribe of Judah, and was probably born in Babylon, during the captivity. He was so distinguished for his family and attainments, as to be selected for the office of

cup bearer to the king of Persia, a situation of great honour and emolument. Upon his own application, he was made governor of Judea, by Artaxerxes Longimanus, and he continued his administration during 36 years, to the reformation established by his order, after the return from the captivity [n].

The book of Esther is so called, because it contains the history of Esther, a Jewish captive, who, by her accomplishments, gained the affections of king Ahasuerus, and by marriage with him, was raised to the throne of Persia. She became an instrument in the hands of the Supreme Being, in which she was the means of a signal deliverance being wrought for her countrymen, when their destruction had been concerted by the offended pride of Haman. The fidelity of the narrative, is attested by the annual solemnity with which the Jews continued to celebrate the festival of Purim, a feast instituted in consequence of the deliverence they experienced, through the intercession of Esther, and which is observed by the Jews to this day [o].

[n] The book of Job contains the history of Job, a man equally distinguished for purity and uprightness of character, and for honours, wealth, and domestic felicity; whom God permitted, for the

trial of his faith and patience, to be suddenly deprived of all his numerous blessings, and to be plunged into the most accumulated distresses. It gives an account of his eminent piety and resignation under the pressure of these severe calamities, and of his subsequent elevation to a degree of prosperity and happiness, greater than that which he had before enjoyed. Great variety of opinions have been entertained concerning the nature and author of this book.

That Job was a real, not a fictitious character, may be inferred by his being conjoined with Daniel and Noah, by the Almighty, when He declared, that these three men should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness. And again: "Behold!" says the apostle James, "we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." Job was an inhabitant of the land of Uz, and was probably descended from Uz, the eldest son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, from whom the country took its name. Elihu, in reckoning up the modes of Divine revelation, takes no notice of the delivery of the Mosaic law; nor does there seem to be any allusion to the Jewish history, in any part of his book.

From hence it is inferred, that Job was prior to Moses, and this inference is supported by the great age to which he lived.

Job and his friends worshipped the true God; and their religious knowledge was, in general, such as might have been derived from the early patriarchs. But the positive declaration, in the 19th chapter, concerning a Redeemer, and a future judgment, is, by most commentators, allowed to be the effect of immediate revelation from God.

Through the whole work, we discover religious instruction shining forth amid the venerable simplicity of ancient manners. It every where abounds with the noblest sentiments of piety, uttered with the spirit of inspired conviction. It is a work unrivalled for the magnificence of its language, and for the beautiful and sublime images which it presents. In the wonderful speech of the Deity, every line delineates his attributes,—every sentence opens with a picture of some grand object of creation, characterized by the most striking features.

Every admirer of sacred antiquity, every inquirer after religious instruction, will seriously rejoice that the enraptured sentence of Job: "O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book!" is realized to an effectual and

unforeseen accomplishment; that while the memorable records of antiquity have mouldered from the rocks, the prophetic assurance, and the sentiments of Job, are graven in scripture which no time shall alter; no changes shall efface[n].

'Of the Psalms, the principal part was composed by David; some of them were prepared for particular solemnities in the Jewish worship; others appear to have been designed generally to celebrate the glorious perfections of God; and others to have been drawn from the Psalmist by the situations of joy, or of sorrow in which he was successively involved. Hence they abound in sentiments of the purest devotion; in grand and animated descriptions of the works of the Almighty, and of his dealings with men; and in the warmest effusions of prayer and praise; of gratitude and thanksgiving; of humble contrition, and of pious hope. They abound also in the most impressive and consoling predictions. One greater than David is continually presenting himself, even Christ, the Redeemer.

Divine inspiration so guided the Psalmist, that, in many instances, his words, at the same time that they referred with sufficient precision to the circumstances of his own life, prefigured, in terms

the most accurate and the most sublime, the humiliation, the sufferings, the triumphant resurrection, and the eternal kingdom of the Messiah. The book of Psalms is frequently cited as of inspired authority by our Saviour and his Apostles; and the prophetic import of many separate passages is illustrated and explained.

The book of Proverbs, which was composed by Solomon, according to the declarations at the commencement, and in a subsequent part of the work, consists partly of maxims of religious instruction, partly of lessons of prudence and discretion, drawn up conformably to the custom of the east, in a pointed and sententious form. The inspiration of Solomon is manifest from the accounts concerning him, which are supplied by the books of Kings and Chronicles. Learned men have shown that this book has furnished many heathen authors with their brightest sentiments. There are in the book many beautiful descriptions and personifications; the diction is highly polished; and there is a concise and energetic turn of expression, which is peculiar to this species of writing. The work is cited in various parts of the New Testament.

The book called Ecclesiastes, is another of the

compositions of Solomon, and is commonly supposed to have been written towards the close of his life, when distress and anguish had reclaimed him from idolatry. Its object is to convince men, by an examination of particulars, that every earthly possession is vain in its nature, and necessarily accompanied with anxiety; and then to lead them piously to fix their hearts on that state, in which there will be no vanity, nor vexation of spirit.

In the course of his argument, the writer, sometimes produces, without previous notice, the absurd sayings and tenets of supposed objectors, for the purpose of refuting them. From a want of attention to this circumstance, we sometimes hear, at the present day, positions asserted on the authority of Solomon, which he quoted only to condemn. The conclusion of the work is worthy of any inspired writer: "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The book called the Song of Solomon, from the name of its author, is generally allowed to have been composed by him as a nuptial poem. It is related of Solomon that he wrote above a thousand

songs, or poems, of which this alone was admitted into the canon of the Jewish Scriptures. This single circumstance appears to intimate, that under the allegorical veil of nuptial emblems, a higher meaning was concealed; and the opinion seems confirmed by various passages in the work, not easily admitting a literal interpretation. Most commentators have therefore concluded, that in shadowing out things Divine, by earthly figures; the book has a typical reference to the then future [illegible] between Christ and the Christian church; a connexion, which in the Psalms and the New Testament, is represented in accommodation to human ideas, under the figurative allusion of the closest and most affectionate of all human connexions, that of marriage[n].

The remaining canonical books of the Old Testament, are confessedly the works of the several prophets, whose names they respectively bear. This being confirmed both by Jewish, and Christian tradition, we may consider their genuineness to be established and allowed.

[n] Isaiah was of the tribe of Judah, and it is supposed, that he was descended from a branch of the royal family. He was the earliest of the four great prophets, and entered upon his prophetic

office in the last year of Uzziah's reign, about 758 years before Christ. It is uncertain how long he continued to prophecy. Some have thought that he died in the 15th or 16th year of Hezekiah's reign; and, in that case, he prophesied about 45 years; but it appears more probable, that he was put to death by command of Manasseh in the first year of his reign; and, in that case, he prophesied more than 61 years [x].

Isaiah is uniformly spoken of in Scripture, as a prophet of the highest dignity. Bishop Lowth calls him the prince of all the prophets, and pronounces the whole of his work, except a few detached passages, to be poetical [n]. It is characterized by grandeur of conception, and elevation of style. The predictions of Isaiah were addressed principally to the kingdom of Judah, though he occasionally adverts to the ten tribes. He proclaims the impending destruction of the Assyrian empire; the utter and perpetual desolation of Babylon; and the subversion of the Philistines, Syrians, Egyptians, and other surrounding nations.

In his predictions of the Messiah, and the final

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x It is said that he was sawn asunder, with a wooden saw; that mode of death is supposed to be alluded to in Hebrews, chap. xi. verse 37.

glories of the Christian church, he expatiates with such magnificence of description, and in language so consolatory and animating, that he has been emphatically denominated, the Evangelical Prophet[s]. [n] These prophecies seem almost to anticipate the gospel history; so clearly do they foreshow the Divine character of Christ, his miracles, his peculiar qualities, and virtues; his rejection, and suffering for our sins; his death, burial, and victory over death; and lastly, his final glory, and the establishment, increase, and perfection of his kingdom, when it shall be enlarged by the conversion of the Jews, and by the fulness of the Gentiles.

Jeremiah was of the sacerdotal family, and a native of Anathoth, a village about three miles distant from Jerusalem. He was called to the prophetic office in the 13th year of Josiah's reign, before Christ, 628 years; and continued to exercise it above 41 years. He was suffered to remain in Judea, when his countrymen were carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar; and he afterwards retired into Egypt with Johanan the son of Kareah. Some accounts state, that he returned into his own country, and died there; but Jerome says, with more probability, that he was stoned to death,

at Talpesha, a royal city of Egypt, about 586 years before Christ.[n]

[s] In his writings, which are distinguished by precision and energy, and by their peculiar pathos, the Babylonian captivity, with the precise time of its continuance, the restoration of the Jews, the destruction of Babylon, and of some other nations, and many circumstances respecting the birth and office of the Messiah, are exhibited in prominent features. He is specifically mentioned and quoted in the New Testament[s].

[n] Ezekiel, like his cotemporary, Jeremiah, was of the sacerdotal race. He was carried away captive to Babylon with Jehoiachim, king of Judah, 598 years before Christ; and was placed, with many others of his countrymen, upon the river Chebar, in Mesopotamia, where he was favoured with the Divine revelations contained in his book. He began to prophecy in the fifth year of his captivity, and is supposed to have prophesied about 21 years.

The boldness with which Ezekiel censured the idolatry and wickedness of his countrymen, is said to have cost him his life; but his memory was greatly revered, not only by the Jews, but also by the Medes and Persians[z]. [s] His prophecies

are remarkable for indignant vehemence of style. They are darkened by mysterious visions, and contain many things yet to be accomplished. Of some parts however, as of the destruction of the Ammonites, Moabites, Philistines, and other countries, by Nebuchadnezzar, the accomplishment was speedy. And to the irrecoverable desolation of Tyre, consonant with his predictions, many revolving ages have borne witness. The book of Revelation appears to allude in a pointed manner to Ezekiel.

Daniel, who was of the royal house of Judah, was carried captive 606 years before Christ, with Jehoiachim, from Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar; and was advanced by this monarch, and his successors, in consequence of Divine inspiration signally bestowed upon him, to the highest offices in the Babylonian empire. Amid the ensnaring allurements of his exalted condition, he exhibited, for the instruction of future ages, and of statesmen in particular, a glorious example of active and unshaken piety, and of stedfast obedience to the commandments of God, in defiance of all personal hazard, and the crooked suggestions of worldly wisdom.

Daniel lived to see his countrymen return, on

the accession of Cyrus, to their native land; but being then nearly ninety years of age, he probably remained in Babylon: His predictions, which are written in prose, relate principally to the four great empires which succeeded each other, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman; to the precise time of the coming of Christ; to the rise and duration of Antichrist; and to the final triumph and universal prevalence of the christian religion.

Many of his prophecies have been fulfilled with such manifest precision, that some sceptical writers, with boldness equalled only by their folly, have asserted, in the face of demonstrative evidence to the contrary, that the predictions were written subsequently to the events which they describe. To the celebrated wisdom of Daniel, a memorable testimony is given by the cotemporary prophet Ezekiel [x], in whose predictions also the Supreme himself declares Daniel's extraordinary righteousness [y]. To these evidences is to be added the unequivocal attestation of our Saviour [z].

Hosea was coeval with Isaiah. His prophecies, which are couched in a style sententious and abrupt, and are attended with considerable obscuri-

x Ezekiel xxxviii. 3. y Ezekiel xiv. 14, 18, 20.
z Matthew xxiv. 15.

ty, were addressed in part to Judah, but principally to Israel. Together with predictions relating to those kingdoms, he intermingles others respecting the Messiah. His book has the express sanction of the New Testament.

Joel was probably cotemporary with Hosea; but the exact time in which he lived is not ascertained. His prophecies, which are animated with the most poetical descriptions, were addressed to the kingdom of Judah, and foretel, together with the invasion of the land of Judea by the Chaldeans, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the glories of the Christian dispensation. He is cited by the evangelical writers.——*Acts* ii. 16.—*Romans* x. 13.

Amos lived during the earlier part of Hosea's ministry. His compositions, which are replete with boldness as well as elegance, chiefly relate to Israel; though he occasionally menaces Judah, and other contiguous nations, with Divine judgments. The happy reign of the Messiah, is also announced. Amos is twice quoted in the Acts of the Apostles.

The period in which Obadiah delivered his short prophecy of denunciations against the Edomites and promises of future restoration to the Jews, is

assigned to the early part of the Babylonian captivity. There is much beauty in his language.

The book of Jonah relates the prophetic commission given to him against Nineveh, his refusal to undertake it, his punishment, and deliverance; for a confirmation of which we shall call other histories to our aid. Arrian says, in his second book, page 202: "That the land was low, and the water shoal from Gaza, a tower of Philistin, near Joppa, quite to the Nile." Hasselquist observes that the water was so shoal at Joppa, that a boat could not reach the place; and that he was carried to land by men.

There is not any difficulty in accounting for Jonah being cast upon dry land; especially as we know there have been numerous instances of great fishes being, by the violence of storms, driven upon the coasts of seas, and even against rocks. The tempest, we read, was so mighty, that the ship in which Jonah had embarked, was like to be broken; his bidding the mariners cast him into the sea, and informing them that thereby the sea would be calmed, shows that Jonah in his state of disobedience, was endued with prophetic prescience. What can be more probable, than that the whale, by the violence of the surge, was forced

up so high, that when the storm subsided, and the sea retired, it was left on dry land? The large bones of a sea animal were preserved at Joppa, and held in religious reverence.

Pomponius Mela says, book 1, chap. xi. p. 68: "They show the vast bones of a sea monster." Pliny also mentions the enormous bones, which he says, were at last brought from Joppa, a city of Judea, as an uncommon curiosity to Rome; and were exposed, among other wonderful things, which M. Scauraus exhibited in his Ædileship.

Bryant, in his learned observation upon scripture passages, says: "Of this I am persuaded, from its situation and antiquity, it was the very Cetus (whale) to which Jonah in his history refers." And he adds: "Particular events in sacred history are thus wonderfully elucidated and confirmed." We see in this wonderful narration, that he who directed the storm to become the occasion of Jonah being swallowed up, made it also subservient to his deliverance. Jonah appears to have lived in the reign of Jeroboam the second, who was king of Israel above 800 years before Christ.

His language is generally that of simple narrative. According to the typical nature of the Jewish dispensation, the miracle of Jonah's pun-

ishment, was appointed to prefigure the time of Christ's continuance in the grave, and is thus applied by Christ himself[s].

[n] Micah was a native of Morasthi, a village in the southern part of Judea[n]. [s] He lived just before the destruction of Samaria, and prophesied both against Israel and Judah. He foretold the birth place of the Messiah, and the exaltation of his dominion over the whole earth. His language is energetic and beautiful; a reference to one of his prophecies, when it had been delivered about 100 years, saved the life of Jeremiah. In the New Testament, his prophetic character is fully confirmed[s].

[n] Nahum is supposed to be of the tribe of Simeon, and to have lived in the reign of Hezekiah. His predictions relate solely to the destruction of Nineveh by the Babylonians and Medes, and are introduced by an animated display of the Divine attributes. "Of all the minor prophets," says Bishop Lowth, "none seem to equal Nahum, in sublimity, ardour, and boldness." His prophecy forms an entire and regular poem[n].

[s] Habakkuk was probably cotemporary with Jeremiah[x]. He predicts the Chaldean invasion;

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x Jeremiah xxvi. 17, 24.

and refers to the redemption, to be wrought, at the appointed time, for the people of God, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The conclusion of his prophecy, is one of the most sublime productions in the whole compass of inspired poetry. The evangelical writers frequently quote the book of Habakkuk [s].

[n] Zephaniah was the son of Cushi. He prophesied in the reign of Josiah, about 630 years before Christ [n]. He foretels, in an impressive manner, the punishment of his idolatrous countrymen, and of some of the neighbouring nations; and concludes with consoling promises of the final restoration of the Jews, under the Gospel Dispensation.

[s] The three remaining Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, lived after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. The two former were cotemporaries, and prophesied during the times when the Jews were rebuilding Jerusalem. Haggai reproves his countrymen for their eagerness to decorate their own habitations, instead of exerting themselves in the re-edification of the temple; excites them, in the name of the Almighty, to restore the sacred edifice; and solemnly assures them, that this latter house should ex-

ceed the former in glory, and be filled with the presence of the Messiah, the desire of all nations. Haggai is quoted in the epistle to the Hebrews.

Zechariah co-operates with Haggai in exhorting the Jews to rebuild the temple. Under various emblems of figurative representations, he predicts the future prosperity of his countrymen, and their union with the Gentile nations, under the blessed government of Christ. Zechariah is frequently quoted in the New Testament.

Malachi, who appears to have lived about 400 years before Christ, was the last of the Jewish Prophets. He reprehends both the Priests and the people, for their disregard of God, and of his laws; foretelling punishments to the wicked, and recompence to the righteous. He announces the coming of the Messiah, "the Son of righteousness, with healing in his wings;" and of his forerunner, John the Baptist, to preach repentance, in the spirit and power of Elijah. He closes the sacred volume with a solemn command to observe faithfully the law of Moses, until the manifestation of the promised Redeemer. The writers of the New Testament afford the clearest attestations to the prophetic character of Malachi *.

To this Chapter, we subjoin a collection of remarks illustrating various passages in the writings of the Prophets, by reference to the peculiar customs and manners of the times in which they lived.

I Sam. ii. 19. *"Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year."*

The women made wearing apparel, and their common employment was weaving stuffs, as making clothes is now. We see in Homer, the instances of Penelope, Calypso, and Circe. This custom was retained at Rome, among women of the first rank. The Emperor Augustus commonly wore clothes made by his wife, sister and daughter.

SUET. *Aug.* 73, *and* FLEURY's *Hist. of the Israelites.*

I Sam. xxii. 6. *"Saul abode in Gibeah, under a tree in Ramah."*

And we have seen that Deborah the Prophetess, who judged Israel, dwelt under a palm tree, between Ramah and Bethel. It may seem extraordinary to us, that kings and judges should not be better accommodated; but, according to eastern customs, it was perfectly natural. Thus, when *Pococke* was travelling in the company of the governor of Faiume, who was treated with great re-

spect as he passed along, they spent one night in a grove of palm trees.

HARMER, *vol.* 2, *page* 127.

II Sam. xx. 9. "*And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand, to kiss him.*"

This is the custom still among the eastern people. The Indians take one another by the chin, that is the beard, when they would give a hearty salute to a person; at the same time saying Bobba, i. e. *father*, or Bii, *brother*.

See PETER DELLA VALLA'S *Travels, page* 410.

1 Kings xix. 12, 13. "*And after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle.*"

The Jews account it a token of reverence to have their feet bare in public worship, and to have their heads covered. This was the practice not of the priest only, but of the people also; and the latter practice remains to this day. Thus on the Divine appearance to Moses in the bush, he hid his face, afraid to look upon God. And in the extraordinary manifestation of the Divine presence to Elijah, he wrapt his face in his mantle. On the same account, perhaps, the angels were represented in vision to

Isaiah, as covering their faces with their wings, in the presence of Jehovah. *Isaiah* vi. 2.

Oriental Customs.

1 Chron. xxii. 8. *"Thou shall not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth."*

The custom which prohibits persons polluted with blood, performing any offices of Divine worship before they are purified, is so ancient and universal, that it may almost be esteemed a precept of natural religion, tending to inspire an uncommon dread and horror of blood shed. In the case of David, it amounted to a disqualification, as it respected the building of the temple. And with regard to some of the Israelites, it was the cause of the rejection of some of their prayers. *Isaiah* i. 15.

The Greeks were influenced by the same principle; and Homer makes Hector say:

> Ill fits it me with human gore distain'd,
> To the pure skies, these horrid hands to raise,
> Or offer heav'ns great Sire polluted praise.

POPE *Il.* vi. 336.

Psalm xvi. Six of the Psalms are distinguished by the title of *Michtam*, which, according to Ainsworth, signifies a golden jewel, and has given rise

to an opinion, that they were written in letters of gold, and hung up in the sanctuary. Writing in letters of gold still continues in the east. *Maillet*, speaking of the royal Mahommedan library in Egypt, says, the greatest part of these books were written in letters of gold.

Lett. xiii. *page* 189.

Psalm xxvi. 6. "*I will wash mine hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, Oh Lord!*"

It was usual for the priests to go round the altar, when they had laid the sacrifice upon it, and bound the victim to the horns of it, at the four corners, and there sprinkled, and poured out the blood. In order for which, they washed their hands from the blood of the sacrifice.

In the worship of the heathen, the same ceremony was performed, so Tibullus:

> But come ye pure, in spotless robes array'd,
> For you, the solemn festival is made;
> Come follow thrice, the victim round the lands;
> In running water purify your hands.

GRAINGER.

Prov. xi. 22. "*A jewel of gold in a swine's snout.*"

"It is the custom in almost all the east, for the women to wear rings in their noses, in the left nostril, which is bored low down in the middle.

These rings are of gold, and have commonly two pearls, and one ruby between, placed in the ring. I never saw a young woman in Arabia, or in all Persia, who did not wear a ring after this manner in her nostrils."

Chardin, *as cited in* Harmer, *vol.* 2. *page* 130.

Prov. xxvii. 9. "*Ointment and perfumes.*"

M. Savory says, at the conclusion of a visit in the east, a slave holding in his hand a silver plate, on which are burning precious essences, approaches the faces of the visiters, each of whom in his turn perfumes his beard. They then pour rose water on the head and hands. This is the last ceremony; after which it is usual to withdraw.

Prov. xxxi. 18. "*Her candle goeth not out by night.*"

There is a passage in Virgil, *Æneid.* viii. *line* 407, which may serve as an illustration of this text:

> Night was now sliding in her middle course;
> The first repose was finish'd, when the dame
> Who by her distaff's slender art subsists,
> Wakes the spread embers, and the sleeping fire;
> Night adding to her work; and calls her maids
> To their long tasks by lighted tapers urged.

TRAPP.

Prov. xxxi. 22. "*She maketh herself coverings of tapestry.*"

Homer, who was nearly cotemporary with Solomon, represents both Helen and Penelope employed at their looms. *Il.* iii. 125. *Od.* ii. 94. And to this day, in Barbary, "the women alone are employed in the manufacturing of their *hykes*, or blankets as we should call them; who do not use the shuttle, but conduct every thread of the wool with their fingers."

SHAW'S *Travels, page* 224.

Isaiah i. 8. "*As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.*"

This was a little temporary hut covered with boughs, straw, or turf, for a shelter from the heat by day, and the cold and dews by night; for the watchman that kept the garden, or vineyard, during the short season while the fruit was ripening; *Job* xxvii. 18; but was presently removed when it had served that purpose. The common people were probably obliged to have such a constant watch to defend the fruit from the Jackalls. "The Jackall," says Hasselquist, in his *Travels, page* 277, "is a species of *mustela*, which is very common in Palestine, especially during the vintage,

and often destroys whole vineyards, and gardens of cucumbers.

LOWTH *in loc.*

Isaiah iii. 16. "*Making a tinkling with their feet.*"

Rauwolf tells us, that the Arab women, whom he saw going down the Euphrates, wore rings about their legs and hands, and sometimes a good many together, which in their stepping, slipped up and down, and so made a great noise. Sir John Chardin says, that in Persia and Arabia, they wear rings about their ankles, which are full of little bells; children and young girls, take a particular pleasure in giving them motion; and with this view they walk quick.

HARMER *vol.* ii. *page* 385.

Isaiah viii. 6, 7. "*For as much as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, now therefore the Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the river, strong and many.*"

The gentle waters of Shiloah, a small fountain or brook just without Jerusalem, which supplied a pool within the city, for the use of the inhabitants, are an apt emblem of the state of the kingdom and house of David; much reduced in strength, yet

supported by the Divine blessing. They are finely contrasted with the waters of the Euphrates, great, rapid, and impetuous, the image of the Babylonian empire, which God threatens to bring down, like a mighty flood upon all the apostates of both kingdoms, as a punishment for their manifold iniquities.

LOWTH *in loc.*

Isaiah xxii. 1. "*Thou art wholly gone up to the house tops.*"

The houses in the east, were, in ancient times, as they are still, generally, built in one and the same uniform manner; the roof or top of the house, is always flat, covered with broad stones, or a strong plaister of terrace, and guarded on every side with a low parapet wall. The terrace is frequented as much as any part of the house. On this, as the season favours, they walk, eat, sleep, and transact business.

The house is built with a court within, into which the windows open; those that open to the street are so obstructed with lattice work, that no one either without, or within, can see through them. Whenever therefore any thing is to be seen, or heard in the streets, every one immediately goes up to the house top to satisfy his curiosity. In the

same manner, when any one had occasion to make any thing public, the readiest and most effectual way of doing it, was to proclaim it from the house top to the people in the streets.

LOWTH *in loc.*

Jerem. xvi. 6. *"Neither shall men lament for them; nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them."*

Cutting the flesh was designed to express grief. The practice was very general. The Jews adopted it. *Jer.* xlviii. 37. It has also been observed in modern times, and at Otaheite, with circumstances remarkably similar to those alluded to by Jeremiah in this passage. There the women wound the crown of the head, under the hair, with a shark's tooth. Cutting the hair is still more general. This they throw on the bier of the dead.

Oriental Customs.

Jerem. xviii. 13. *"They that depart from me, shall be written in the earth."*

Peter della Valla, observed a method of writing short lived memorandums in India, which he thus describes: "I beheld children writing their lessons with their fingers, on the ground, the pavement being for that purpose strewed all over with very

fine sand. When the pavement was full, they put the writing out, and if need were, strewed new sand from a little heap they had before them, wherewith to write further." *Page* 40. Certainly it means in general, soon to be blotted out, as is apparent from *Psalm* lxix. 28. This account might suggest the use of sand for writing, in Dr. Bell's and Lancaster's schools.

Ezekiel ix. 4. "*Mark upon their foreheads.*"

Maurice, in his "Indian Antiquities," speaking of the religious rites of the Hindus, says: "Before they can enter the great Pagoda, an indispensable ceremony takes place, which can only be performed by the hand of a Brahmin, and that is the impressing of their foreheads with the *tiluck*, or mark of different colours, as they may belong either to the sect of Veeshnu, or Sceva. If the temple be that of Veeshnu, their foreheads are marked with a longitudinal line, and the colour used is vermilion. If it be the temple of Sceva, they are marked with a parallel line, and the colour used is turmeric or saffron. In regard to the *tiluck*, I must observe, that it is a custom of very ancient date, in Asia, to mark the servants in the forehead.

Ezekiel xix. 11. "*She had strong rods, for the sceptres of them that bare rule.*"

The allusion here is evidently to the sceptres of the ancients, which were no other than walking sticks, cut from the stems or branches of trees, and decorated with gold, or studded with golden nails. Thus Achilles is introduced as swearing by a sceptre, which being cut from the trunk of a tree on the mountains, and stripped of its bark and leaves, should never more produce leaves and branches, or sprout again. Such a one the Grecian judges carried in their hand.

See HOMER *Il. page* 234.

Hosea iv. 12. "*Their staff declareth unto them.*"

Of the method of divination alluded to, the prophet Cyril, and Theophylect, give the following account. It was performed by erecting two walking sticks; after which they muttered forth a certain charm, and then, according as the sticks fell, backwards, or forwards, towards the right, or left, they gave advice in any affair.

Hosea xiv. 5. "*I will be as the dew unto Israel.*"

The earth, while it supplies the various plants that grow upon it, is supplied for that purpose

very much by the dew, which is full of oleaginous particles. " The dews seem to be the richest present the atmosphere gives to the earth, having, when putrified in a vessel, a black sediment like mud, at the bottom. This seems to cause that darkish colour to the upper part of the ground; and the sulphur which is found in the dew, may be the chief ingredient of the cement of the earth; sulphur being very glutinous, and nitre dissolvent." " Dew has both these."

TULL'S *Husbandry*, 6.

Joel i. 17. " *Garners.*"

Dr. Shaw informs us, in his *Travels, page* 139, that " in Barbary, after the grain is winnowed, they lodge it in *mattamores*, or subterraneous magazines, two or three hundred of which are sometimes together; the smallest holding four hundred bushels." And Dr. Russel, in his *History of Aleppo*, says: " About Aleppo in Syria, their granaries at this day, are seven subterraneous grottos, the entry to which is by a small hole, or opening like a well, often in the highway; and as they are commonly left open when empty, they make it not a little dangerous riding near the villages in the night."

Zechariah xiv. 20. "*In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord.*"

Rooke, in his "Travels to the coast of Arabia Felix," says, the Cavalry horses were sumptuously caparisoned, being adorned with gold and silver trappings, bells hung round their necks, and rich housings. Cardin informs us, that in Persia and Turkey, the reins are of silk, of the thickness of a finger, on which is written the name of God, or other inscriptions.

HARMER, *vol.* 1. *page* 470.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.